Rising Above The Ruins in France

Corinna Haven Smith

Willard W Blanchard
Christmas 1920
Mother

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RISING ABOVE THE RUINS IN FRANCE

One of the Many Cellar Homes in the Devastated Area

RISING ABOVE THE RUINS IN FRANCE

AN ACCOUNT OF THE PROGRESS MADE SINCE THE ARMISTICE IN THE DEVASTATED REGIONS IN RE-ESTABLISHING INDUSTRIAL ACTIVITIES AND THE NORMAL LIFE OF THE PEOPLE

BY

CORINNA DUCEN SMITH

AND

CAROLINE B. HILL

WITH 80 ILLUSTRATIONS

G. P. PUTNAM'S SONS
NEW YORK AND LONDON
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BY

CORINNA HAVEN SMITH
(MRS. JOSEPH LINDON SMITH)
AND
CAROLINE R. HILL

"War is like a comet;—the tail of it is longer than the star itself."—*Curé of Reninghelst.*

WITH 88 ILLUSTRATIONS

G. P. PUTNAM'S SONS
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BY
CORINNA HAVEN SMITH

To

AUGUSTE F. JACCACI

THE DEVOTED FRIEND OF

THE CHILDREN OF THE FRONTIER

PREFACE

Our work for "The Children of the Frontier" brought us in close contact with the people who were facing the refugee problem in all of its complexities of suffering and horror. After the Armistice it was possible to visit the families from whom the children in our charge came and to determine when they could be safely returned to their homes. Most of the families belonged to the devastated districts of the Departments of the Marne, the Somme, the Aisne, the Nord and Pas de Calais. We visited hundreds of families of refugees and were thus given an opportunity for intimate study of conditions in many ruined villages.

When, on returning to America, we heard on every hand expressions of doubt as to whether the French people were doing their share toward overcoming the difficulties resulting from the war, we felt that in loyalty to our brave friends of the north we would like to tell the story of their effort as we had seen it.

The world at large will never know the full measure of the suffering of the population of the north of France, nor of the destruction wrought by the invading armies. The "cleaning-up" squads and Nature have already done much to hide the scars. What the tourist, flying by motor through the devastated regions, will see can in no way give an adequate impression of the destruction nor of its effects upon the inhabitants. It is impossible to visualize the scene by reading the record of the impressions of other people; adjectives have ceased to carry meaning; generalities are without effect.

Because our work called us to the north at various times, both during the war and after the Armistice, a series of pictures has been revealed to us which we have tried to reproduce by camera and by our simple story. These pictures are cross-sections, so to speak, of actual conditions. They leave much to the imagination, but it is hoped that they will give a true idea of certain phases of the world conflict as affecting individuals, their bravery in facing physical hardships, their tenacity of purpose in the struggle against crushing misfortune, their fight to maintain their splendid morale. The indomitable spirit and energy of the people of

the north of France will soon succeed in re-establishing industrial activities and normal community life.

C. H. S.
C. R. H.

Boston, May, 1920.

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RISING ABOVE THE RUINS IN FRANCE

Rising Above the Ruins in France

CHAPTER I

AFTER THE ARMISTICE

NOVEMBER 11, 1918.—PARIS! From early morning the crowds gradually gather in the Place de la Concorde, until it is black with a moving mass of people waiting in silent expectancy. The clock strikes eleven. There is the sound of a cannon—the struggle is ended! With a united impulse the crowd drifts toward the Strasbourg statue and the black crepe draped over it since 1870 disappears as if by magic. On a wall nearby is posted:

"Conseil Municipal de Paris
HABITANTS DE PARIS
C'est la Victoire, la Victoire triomphale.

Sur tous les fronts l'ennemi vaincu a deposé les armes, le sang va cesser de couler. Que Paris sorte de la fière réserve qui lui a valu l'admiration du monde . . .

Nos morts peuvent dormir en paix, le sublime sacrifice qu'ils ont fait de leur vie à l'avenir de la race et au salut de la Patrie ne sera pas sterile . . .

VIVE LA REPUBLIQUE!
VIVE LA FRANCE IMMORTELLE!"

Until dark the surging pageants pass;—soldiers, and women with widows' veils covering tear-stained faces, with smiles that go to one's heart. They know the price that has been paid, and the smile is their answer that it was worth while.

American lads, mounted on high trucks, have with them French girls, children and old people, who wave the American flag instead of their own, and in the hands of many of the strong American lads is the tricolor.

Down in the poorer districts a virile old peasant woman harangues the crowd.

"For fifteen months I was a prisoner in the Pas de Calais. My son was killed, my old man car-

Strasbourg Statue, Place de la Concorde, Paris

A Dead, Formless Village

ried off. I nursed the wounded in the hospitals. Everywhere I saw blood and suffering. Today, I see Alsace-Lorraine!"

After the Armistice, the human war machine moved out of the war zone taking its movable material to be used for the Army of Occupation. Labor and burial squads replaced the fighting units in this devastated stretch of territory, 6000 square miles in area, with a normal population of 2,000,000 people. Over 1000 villages had been burned or otherwise destroyed; 550,000 houses damaged, of which about half were totally wrecked; 3500 miles of railroad track had been made useless; 800 bridges destroyed; a large proportion of the manufacturing plants had been gutted; 1,500,000 head of live-stock had disappeared.

In the face of such vast need of assistance as the situation called for, it was months before a well-organized scheme of relief could properly function. The Government immediately created a Ministry for dealing with all affairs connected with the liberated regions. Later a bureau for activities affecting destroyed industries was created.

Passport bureaus were crowded with applicants wishing to return to the north, and a steady

stream of refugees flowed back over the highways, not waiting for the formality of papers. It was the same population that had fled in terror before the invading armies. They struggled along, living in cellars, *abris*, huts or ruins, *en attendant.* The goal of all was to reach home, little realizing the scene of complete destruction which awaited them. They were to find villages and towns with streets filled with the rubbish of buildings; bridges down, sewerage and water systems damaged or totally destroyed; no medical or nursing service; no transportation, lighting or system of *ravitaillement.*

Some of the earlier to return were able to collect abandoned army material with which to construct simple huts or patch up shelters. Property boundaries were in many cases obliterated and if established at random were likely to be incorrect, so that the labor of rebuilding would be lost. Few of the refugees had enough money to start operations, and to establish their right to war indemnity meant indefinite delay. All sources of livelihood were cut off, since the factories and shops formerly giving employment had been destroyed, and the land rendered unfit for cultivation. Utensils, machinery and equipment of every kind was lacking.

The first necessity was to make village life and

activities possible and safe by removing rubbish and tottering walls, and collecting bricks and other material that could be utilized for rebuilding. The Government itself undertook no work of reconstruction of Government or other buildings, but let out contracts to private contractors. This gave immediate work to returning inhabitants, as well as to German prison labor and squads of militarized coolie workmen. The building of barracks did not keep pace with the demands of the returning population, and indescribable conditions due to unsanitary housing resulted. No sooner was a cellar vacated by placing the occupants in better quarters than another family moved into the dark and damp abode.

Immediately after the Armistice we spent weeks in the north among these civilians who were paying the cost of the war in terms of reduced efficiency, energy and health. All roads led past dead, formless villages, in many of which the streets had disappeared. Personal possessions lying about in deserted courtyards of partially destroyed villages were even more pathetic. The unsalvaged battlefields gave in detail their sad story. In the farming districts agricultural implements wantonly smashed and charred remnants of crops remained as evidence against the enemy.

In the industrial regions the twisted, blackened ruins of factories were silhouetted against the sky. When one passed groups of old men bowed from suffering, women and children with colorless faces, the skin drawn tightly over the bones, trudging over roads which led from one misery to another, one needed the sign seen in a British camp—"Pessimists shot on sight."

November 11, 1919! A significant anniversary to be starting on a motor trip north. At eleven o'clock we observe the two-minute silence decreed "in memoriam" and we think of a scene in the lift of the "Crillon" Armistice night, when we were dismissed at the *entresol* instead of the fifth floor. "*C'est la victoire,*" said the one-armed soldier running the lift, as if that satisfactorily explained the lack of motive power. A gouty old French Admiral puffing up five flights of stairs beside us murmured, "*La paix sera plus compliquée que la guerre.*"

As a brown duffle bag filled with provisions is placed on top of our car, a delegate from the north seeing us off remarks: "You will find food now wherever you go. Emergency conditions in the devastated area are long since passed."

Taking the high road to Meaux, we journey

Ruins of One of the Biggest Steel Factories in the World, Beautor La Fère

One of Many Bridges Dynamited by the Germans in Retreat

through cultivated country pleasant to the eye. Beautiful scenery in back area leaves you unmoved, but as soon as you reach the first destroyed village your mind as a mirror reflects impressions impersonally. Just as the war is so much bigger than human beings,—its aftermath is the same, and one is quickened by contact with it. Every roadside scene strikes home and the impression made is never to be forgotten and yet almost impossible to record. The bent old woman carrying burdens mentally and physically heavy,—nothing in your later life can crowd her from your memory, nor the intonation of her voice as she speaks, with a mixture of courage, patriotism and personal grief. What do you remember of her? The pathos?—More than that, the lesson that you have learned from her of the philosophy of life.

If you have seen the *rapatriés* returning through Evian—the supreme triumph of France—; if you have been at stations to receive refugees fleeing in front of the advancing enemy,—it is not the slight thing you are able to give to them, but it is what you get from them that remains in your mind. Even a refugee child, hungry, cold and suffering, teaches you something that you wish to tell your own children in inculcating the rudiments of patriotism.

The Germans devastated many departments of France, but they never crushed the spirit of the French, therefore were unable to conquer them.

A tourist after "doing" the battle-front in a few days, remarked—"Ruins get monotonous. It's just the difference in the height of the walls remaining in town after town. Everything else is the same." He did not speak the language and was an onlooker, but if you know one of the inhabitants in a village that has suffered, you become, for the duration of your stay in it, an intimate part of the village life, its problems and its joys, and each visit is different.

Priscilla Crane, who is with us as secretary, has been busy studying maps and papers. She suddenly exclaims: "Just listen to these statistics from the Marne. Two hundred thousand people out of three hundred thousand have been refugees. What a story these figures tell of heart-breaking scenes, homeless women and children fleeing in terror before the enemy's advance,—and many of them fled twice!

"Sixty-one thousand of the Marne refugees have already returned; isn't that brave of them? In August of this summer they had only nine of their destroyed factories running with 3000 workmen employed, they now, three months later,

have thirty-four with 5500 workmen. That's 55 per cent of those destroyed now in operation. I have also been looking up French committees in this region. Over sixty villages are covered by them. If we stop to visit all the French committees where we go, we'll not have time to do anything else."

In the destroyed villages through which we pass we find building activity, a number of carpenters at work, old women pushing vegetables in wheelbarrows, German prisoners and French soldiers on hay wagons, and peasants in the fields. One realizes that winter is at hand, and that the people are determined to be as much prepared as possible to face it.

We pass through several of the villages reached by the Methodist and Wellesley College Units. At Lucy le Bocage, the Wellesley Unit center, we get an atmosphere of comfort and pleasant personalities. Several of the girls speak of how responsive the older boys are and mention evening classes for teaching them English. They say that the social center is popular and the cinema and victrola are much appreciated. Whole families come to the performances, the older members bringing their work. Recently the young people asked if they could not have an evening to themselves

since the floor space was limited and it was difficult to dance with babies crawling about. So it had been decided to give an invitation dance—"Admission by card only." The girls tell us, "This was a great success and the latest American steps are now the rage in the district."

Members of the Wellesley and Methodist Units tell us that people prefer to pay for necessities and that they sell things at a slight loss. There are classes for sewing, sloyd and basketry. Dr. Wadsworth, in charge of the Methodist Unit says that in two of his villages, Vaux and Monneaux, the inhabitants are Protestants.

"But Catholics or Protestants, it makes no difference to us. We all work together under the French committees."

He tells us they have a system of spending the money made from selling supplies for the benefit of the village from which it has come. For instance, in one village a man with a club foot had a special boot bought for him in Paris costing 250 francs, paid for with funds obtained in this way. He was delighted with his boot, saying, "All my life my foot has made me uncomfortable."

We find traces of intimate comradeship between the members of these American units and the population among whom they are working. Again

and again one's mind comes back to the American lads who fought and "held" in these villages during their destruction.

We pass Bouresches, where the railroad station shows the results of struggle as our troops wrested ground from the enemy's best guard division; and Cantigny captured in a splendid dash. We are surrounded by heights taken by Americans advancing with the French,—Mont St. Père in the face of machine-gun and artillery fire,—Forêt de Fère, where they cleaned out the machine-gun nests. Their fine morale and splendid fighting qualities were in great part due to General Pershing's constant admonition when the troops arrived in France. "Let us work hard and be inconspicuous."

Priscilla remarks, "There is a French committee near Belleau, at a place called Chézy-en-Orxois with Madame Dufay in charge."

Madame Dufay is the wife of General Dufay, and this little village will always be associated with her for us. Both of her sons were killed, one of them while advancing with the Americans July 18th, after Château-Thierry. He fell near Chézy and was buried here. Madame Dufay came and settled in this little village with her daughter and dead son's fiancée. She has a tremendous feeling

for Americans, and before the cemetery at Belleau was made she used to care for isolated graves found in the woods, placing flowering plants on them, and sending back to parents personal belongings such as photographs and watches. Now she is working for civilians and showing no intention of leaving. She is sturdy in appearance and always has a smile. One of her intimates remarked about her, "It is only very seldom that even I, who know her well, catch her off her guard late in the evening, with a sad expression."

After passing a German prison camp, just outside of Belleau, we get out of the motor and walking through a field covered with snow, falling softly, come to the entrance of the cemetery. An American flag floats above it. Nearby is a barrack being put up for the use of families who come to visit graves. One has a sense of fitness in an arrangement that will give them privacy and consideration.

The general appearance of the cemetery is simple and dignified,—the crosses are of the same height and on the same level. We stand in silence, and think of General Degoutte's citations to men he commanded in this region and his comments to us:

"Under enemy fire the Americans crossed the

Escaut and held the opposite bank in the face of frequent counter attacks.

"No American was found dead with his back to the enemy," he had said. "They gave their lives without counting. The Germans could not stand up against the spirit of 'Young America.'"

On our previous visit we had found a little old peasant woman sitting on the outskirts of the graveyard, quietly sobbing to herself. There were no French dead here, and as if in answer to an unspoken query, she said, "These American lads who have come so far to help us, they are our dead, too."

As we look at the falling snowflakes mingling with the whiteness of these crosses her words come to mind.

Our civilian line behind these dead has broken. The treaty is not ratified.

CHAPTER II

THE MARNE

AFTER spending the night in Château-Thierry we make an early start. Our first stop is at Fère-en-Tardenois. This town is badly knocked about and German signs are still in evidence. A painting is suspended in mid-air in the church.

We go directly to the *Mairie*. In the entrance court are some camouflaged cannon. In place of a front wall to the building there is a large patch of black tarred paper. We are received by Monsieur Daudon, *le Maire*, who takes us into his bureau through a hall filled with boxes of supplies for distribution, some of them American. He tells us that Fère was occupied by the Germans for two months.

When we explain the object of our visit he says he will furnish us with information about any of our families returning to his district, which includes thirty-one communes.

"The town records have been brought back and

put in place many months since. The system is the same everywhere. Cards giving the *état civil* of all the families who have returned are on file, distinct from the cards of families who remained in the town, so it takes but a few minutes to look up a family.

"The French committees," he adds, "keep the record of just what has been furnished in the way of relief. There is no confusion or duplication, and the story is complete."

When we speak of vacancies in our colonies, he says:

"The mothers in our villages are not willing to send their children away this winter, even when the home is in a cellar. Families have been separated so long during the war that they are happy to be together again.

"Out of 530,000 inhabitants of the Aisne, 290,000 were refugees. Now, 41,000 are back. We are showing encouraging progress in our factories. By August of this year 30 of the destroyed ones were running; now, three months later, there are 83. That brings the number of the destroyed ones now back in condition up to 48 per cent. In August we had 1500 men employed in cleaning up and rebuilding, now there are almost 3500; and of workmen actually employed in the

factories themselves, in August the number was only 650, now there are more than 1400. In comparison with 1914, that means 29 per cent. We are an agricultural region and, fortunately, our fields are fairly intact."

As we leave, he escorts us into the hall, saying: "My people are thankful for the fertility of their fields. They say where one lives makes but little difference, after all."

Then he calls out, "Stop at Rue de Reims, No. 36, to see a refugee family just arrived. They have a goat, of which they are proud, but he is not a friendly animal."

The goat regards us with great suspicion, head down, but finally permits us to enter a small room where a mother with seven children are living. There is straw on the floor. A baby under a year is half asleep in the only bed in the room. The mother says: "He does not get sufficient sleep during the night since the children take turns in using the bed, so he is usually sleeping by day."

They have been wandering about in the south of France and seem glad to be back home.

"My husband is at the station with my oldest boy to get our baggage. We fled during bombardment, with bombs dropping on the train that took us, but we saved our trunk and the goat."

We make a détour to take in Vailly on our way to Rheims. Vailly will always mean to us the first time that we were under bombardment. In September, 1917, after leaving Fismes, we had turned off the road to Rheims, trying to reach a village in the vicinity of Vailly held by the enemy. Big shells were being used in an attempt to interrupt the French *camion* service. At the foot of the hill in the Vailly direction a shell exploded on the roof of a nearby house.

"Vailly is an ugly corner," a *poilu* had remarked as we stood among a group of them watching the shells fall. From a slight elevation we looked down into a graveyard, many of the crosses above graves of recent date, and—gruesome sight—lines and lines of open graves ready for the next victims of bursting shells.

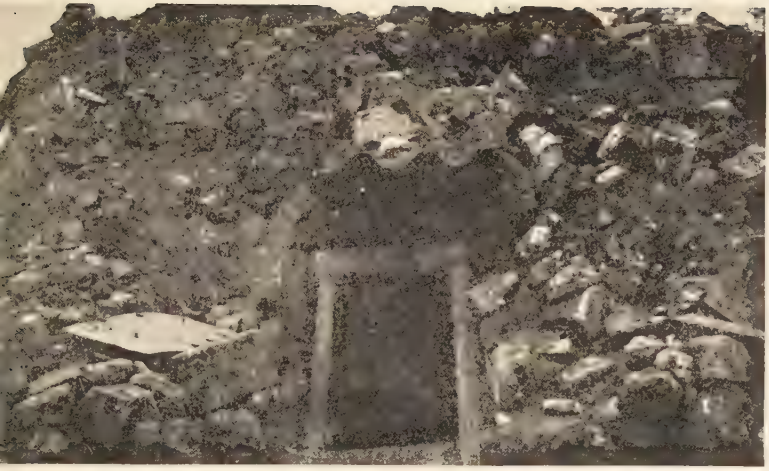
Now was an opportunity to enter Vailly and learn what had happened to the people during the enemy occupation. As we look across the mass of débris and fallen walls, it is impossible to realize that formerly 2000 people lived here, and we wonder where the 500 people who have returned are now finding shelter. An aspect of gloom and depression seems to hang over this spot, once so fertile and picturesque, to which a storm center of war has brought complete desolation. The fruit

trees still standing on the slopes are black skeletons from which all life has been choked by asphyxiating gases.

We climb a hill following a tiny thread of smoke coming out of the ground from pipes in the midst of ruins. We stop at steps leading into a cellar, and voices from the blackness invite us to enter. We become conscious of a very old man, bent from rheumatism, huddled close to a stove, and an old woman, holding aloft a lamp, peers into our faces. By its light is revealed how limited is the space in which this couple are living. We stand on the stairway; the end of the room is entirely filled with a pile of wood and rubbish. Against one side are a few household utensils and a bed fitted closely into a niche. It is protected from the dripping water by a hood of corrugated iron.

"The rain comes in badly here," says the old man in a weak voice, speaking from his warm corner, "but in bed we are dry."

Miserable indeed is the appearance of this couple. The husband is eighty-five years old and his wife is four years younger. She tells us that they remained in Vailly during the German occupation. They speak of the bread that the Germans gave them. "There was always green spots and other dirt in it."



Home of the Old Couple we Visit in San Precord

The Only Kind of Playground these Children can Remember

We ask them to come up into the light to be photographed. The old man was quite breathless and leaned heavily on his cane, when reaching the top. The light is poor and we ask if they are willing to walk back of the ruins into the open. This is too much for the husband. He feebly makes his excuses and crawls back to his dark corner. We photograph the woman in what was once a garden.

"Here were my fruit trees," she says, pointing to some mangled stumps. "Across the wall were our houses."

The foundations of two houses which must have been of good size are dimly visible.

"They didn't belong to you, did they?" we ask in surprise.

"Yes," she says. "We were comfortable before the war. We had our income, furniture and these houses to let. But now, we have nothing. *Nous sommes des malhereux.*"

As we thread our way down the path, past many cellar homes, to reach the village beneath, our eyes are attracted to a dozen or more bright red roofs, conspicuous in the dull setting of gray ruins.

We visit the local French Red Cross which serves as a distributing center, with warehouses, dispensary, rooms for men who had returned with-

out their families, and living quarters for the personnel. Nearby are other barracks used as *Mairie*, post office and school.

"Two hundred children are back," we are told in passing this building where a group of children are playing happily. There is tremendous activity in removing the débris. The magnitude of the task is evidenced by the fact that a thousand prisoners have been delegated for the purpose. Everywhere are *camions*, wheelbarrows and horse-drawn vehicles in use.

Madame Gelobart, in charge of the *Poste*, and her assistant are busy serving a line of refugees. These women, warmly clothed and of fine type, have come in from the surrounding country to make their purchases, for which they pay cash. After paying for her purchases we notice in the open purse of an elderly peasant two 20-franc notes.

Madame Gelobart turns to us when the women leave.

"Please forgive me for keeping you waiting," she says, "but these people must catch trains.

"Vailly has suffered, and there is still more suffering here than in many of the other ruined villages. Our people who have returned are chiefly the agriculturists and their problems are difficult, but since they live without complaint in cellars

on the slope of San Precord," she points to where we found the old couple, "I have no fear for the future. It's the red roofs that give the people courage to remain," she adds smilingly.

Owing to the conditions of the roads and destroyed bridges, we are unable to visit two villages in this vicinity in which we have families. With our heavy car we must keep to main roads with foundations.

We stop at Fismes to look up the family of a boy in one of our colonies. We can see at a glance that the street, Rue des Bassins, is an impossibility for our car. Priscilla starts off on foot to find the address. When after ten minutes she has not returned, we get out of the car, and in the mud and drizzle plod along in search of her. In response to several calls of "Priscilla," a cheerful voice replies:

"Here I am. Come in. I have not found our family, but such a lovely woman with a baby."

A charming-faced young woman, pronouncing her words with real diction, makes a pretty scene with a tow-headed, blue-eyed child in her arms.

"Have you any difficulty in getting milk?" we ask.

"Oh, no," she replies. "Fortunately, we have our cow."

"Where do you keep it?"

"On our farm. There has been hard fighting in this place. The American lads fought hand to hand combats through the streets. They were brave, never turning their backs to the enemy. And many of them were killed. Twenty-one are buried behind our barn. It is sad to see the graves there, and busy as I am, I have always taken care of them and wondered who they were. There are no names over them. The Americans did much in this region to drive back the enemy, and after all, we should not complain. There are many walls and roofs left. Before the war we were 3500; about 3000 have already come home.

"You are looking for Monsieur Waldant?" (He is the grandfather of our boy.) "This is his house. We rent it from him. At present he is living at Troyes. He is old and not very strong. He would have found the winter here hard, but in the spring he will return."

When the request came to us from Monsieur Waldant to take the boy, it read: "Owing to continued bombardment I should be glad to have the boy in a place of safety."

An old man was quietly reading his newspaper by the stove.

"My father helps me." She smiles at him gently, as if introducing us. We are fascinated by her even white teeth and graceful gestures. The baby does not hold its head normally. When we comment gently on the fact, the young mother sighs:

"I have often noticed that her back is not strong. Perhaps I worked too hard carrying heavy loads, and was worried before she was born. My husband was killed in the war."

After leaving her we are silent until we reach Rheims. We go to the Hotel Continental and on commenting to the landlady that her hotel looks comfortable, she says:

"We do what we can to care for our guests, but everything is difficult. We have pasted up the shell holes with paper, and most of the bedrooms now have curtains. In yours, Mesdames, they are made from the blue cloth of uniforms. Perhaps it is not right to use the soldiers' material for this," she adds half apologetically, "but what can one do?

"A fire? We have no coal, but a little wood. That, too, is hard to get. It is full of shrapnel. Recently three saws were broken in attempting to cut pieces seamed with it. The bricks are loosened in your fireplace and possibly will tumble

down, but before that happens you may be able to get some warmth from it."

In mounting the stairs, a sign on the wall faces us: "Do not forget the employees. They are all refugees."

A visit to Rheims in September, 1917, is in our thoughts; the sentry's warning at the gate of the town—"*on bombard par ici*"—a few soldiers in the streets, and the deafening roar of shells; in front of the cathedral the mounted figure of Jeanne d'Arc holding high the remnants of a French flag, the only thing untouched in the midst of ruins; Archbishop Luçon's words: "Because the beauty of detail is gone, to you my church is a hideous corpse, but it will be sacred for all time because of the millions of prayers that have been prayed here. Remember the spirit of beauty always has been in the world and always will be, no matter how many beautiful objects the Germans destroy."

On this visit we had thought only of the priest and his church, not of the city itself.

Again, Rheims after the Armistice! As we looked from the cathedral to the ruins of which it was the center, we became conscious of the price the city had paid for her four years of resistance to incessant bombardment,—her historic buildings disfigured, 12,000 of her homes destroyed,

hundreds of her civilians and 10,000 of her soldiers killed. Suddenly the maimed figures on the façade of the cathedral seemed to struggle through the shadows to proclaim—Rheims can never die!

CHAPTER III

RHEIMS

THE bricks of our fireplace have collapsed and the room is no longer warm. After an early breakfast we start out into the streets. Rheims now has little to suggest former impressions.

In every direction there are signs of life. 40,000 out of 120,000 people have returned. Immediately after the Armistice the people began to struggle back, living on the site of their former homes in any kind of shelter. Despite their pluck there are families who might have been discouraged at the sight of general devastation that confronted them if there had not been someone to give a helping hand.

"Retour à Reims" was organized to give immediate assistance in the way of necessities to returned inhabitants. Its aim was to give help to everyone without class distinction. They rented furniture for a three-month period, with the option of either renewal or purchase at the end

Rheims Cathedral Being Bombed

of that time. Often refugees needed only temporary help, having their own furniture elsewhere. Flemish stoves were distributed in numbers. At first they paid 95 francs for them but later it was possible to lower the price to 60 francs. Sheets were rented for 3 francs a month and sold for 12 francs.

Installments were always paid promptly when due. Many things were given free to the sick and the old who had no money.

The French women in charge never failed in either tact or devotion.

During the first month when families were asked, "Why did you come back?"—the answer always was: "Oh, a neighbor told me that all necessities are now to be found here, so I returned."

The first to return were former employees of the city, architects, clerks, priests and workmen in trades. They all needed beds and household utensils. Even former big proprietors came back to nothing.

The man of the family was the first to turn up. He would hurriedly prepare a shelter and after he was provided with a few beds, mattresses, some bedding and a stove he was in a position to have his wife and children join him. After several experiences the Committee did not give the man

kitchen utensils, because the woman would always wish to select them for herself, and returned those furnished.

Every family had to present a registration card with the following information:—the name and address, profession of the wage earner, the condition of his house on the date of his return, what wages he is earning, and the help that has already been received.

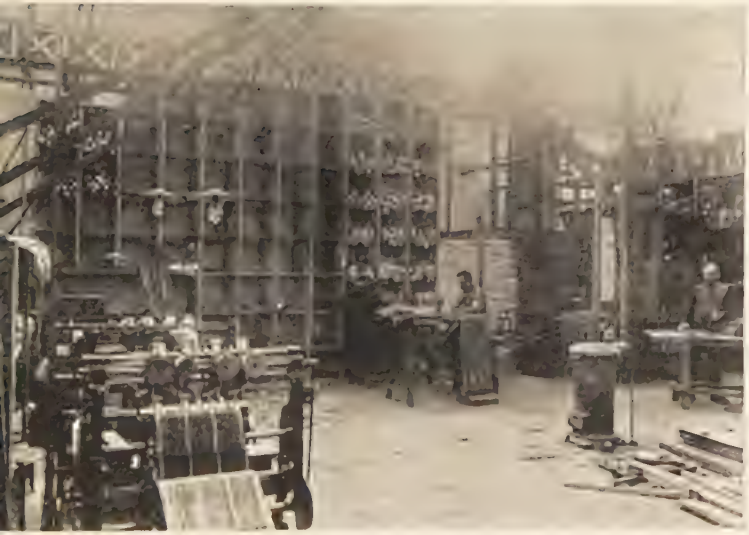
An amusing story is told us of a man coming into the office and demanding a layette. In looking up the family record it was discovered that two weeks previous the wife had received a layette. This fact was stated to the man rather sternly. He looked nervous and in a hurry. "Do not stop to talk and look up records," he said, "the baby is twins."

All the committees have worked together, French, British and American, in furnishing supplies to the "Retour à Reims," for distribution.

Le Marquis de Polignac, President of "La Société Coöperative de Reconstruction de Reims," says to us:

"We started this in October, 1919. Its object was to assist owners of damaged property to rebuild or repair their property; to present for them their claims for *dommage de guerre* to the Cantonal

A Wrecked Carton Factory at the Time of the Armistice, Rheims



Same Factory One Year Later

Commission, to furnish them with architects and engineers, and to keep an oversight on building.

"The Society is administered by a Central Council, but each quarter is represented by a delegate to report on local questions that come up. We have divided Rheims into ten districts around the cathedral as a center. In the face of such a tremendous undertaking, individual effort would be doomed to failure in rebuilding factories or homes. The only way to have the town rebuilt quickly is to have everyone work together. This is what this Coöperative has accomplished.

"Nothing is more important than to rebuild workmen's homes. The Society will omit no effort to have Rheims again become a powerful industrial and trade center, but we need funds.

"The women of the Polignac family worked during the war. Several of my cousins remained here during bombardment. This is our country, and naturally we shall work until Rheims is rebuilt. You can get an idea of how long, difficult and expensive our task will be from the fact that out of 13,000 buildings only 16 were intact.

"In Rheims the ruins still remain, but life is again active," were his last words.

We visit the temporary hospital which is to be replaced by the "American Memorial Hospital."

There is a ward for civilians, a maternity ward, a dental clinic and dispensary.

Dr. Lefort, in charge, welcomes us cordially and introduces us to some of the nurses. While tea is being served a tired-looking nurse comes in and throws herself down on the sofa.

"Boy or girl?" asks Dr. Lefort.

"Boy," replies the nurse.

Dr. Lefort, turning to us, remarks:

"We average about four births a day, boys predominating; Nature's method of readjustment after a war, you see."

She speaks of the good work being done by Mademoiselle Fouriaux now in charge of a villa for delicate children in Epernay. She stayed in Rheims until the last remaining civilians were evacuated in May, 1918. When she was asked if she was not afraid of living under constant bombardment, she replied carelessly:

"I have learned to know the cellars of Rheims *comme ma poche.*"

Dr. Lefort continues, "The English are also working here in *goutte de lait* stations, and they furnish district nurses."

She takes us through the children's ward. The place is ingeniously installed. In the bathrooms the water is heated on stoves taken from the

trenches. Splints from German dugouts are being used for soap-holders.

"And what do you think of my fireless cooker *le dernier cri* in housekeeping? You know how conservative the French are supposed to be but my cooks are as pleased with the fireless cookers as I am myself.

"The sewerage system of Rheims was used by the Germans for war purposes. All the telephone wires to the front went through it. To restore it is a serious problem."

In the maternity ward at the end, in one long bed, are about a dozen babies rolled up in pink and blue blankets, all looking exactly alike, soft, comfortable and very sweet.

"Do you never get them mixed up?" we ask.

"Never. Every baby has its name on the bed, and in addition, an identification tag on its wrist."

She comments on the medical situation in Rheims.

"It is very difficult. The French doctors have no libraries, no instruments, no dressings. Their records are lost. One of our clever orthopedic surgeons did medical work in the army during the war. He returned to find his home and private hospital in ruins. He has been able to start a private hospital but must limit his charitable work

to caring for soldiers who have need for his special training."

We leave Dr. Lefort with admiration for her splendid ability and energy which created from a partly ruined building a smoothly running hospital.

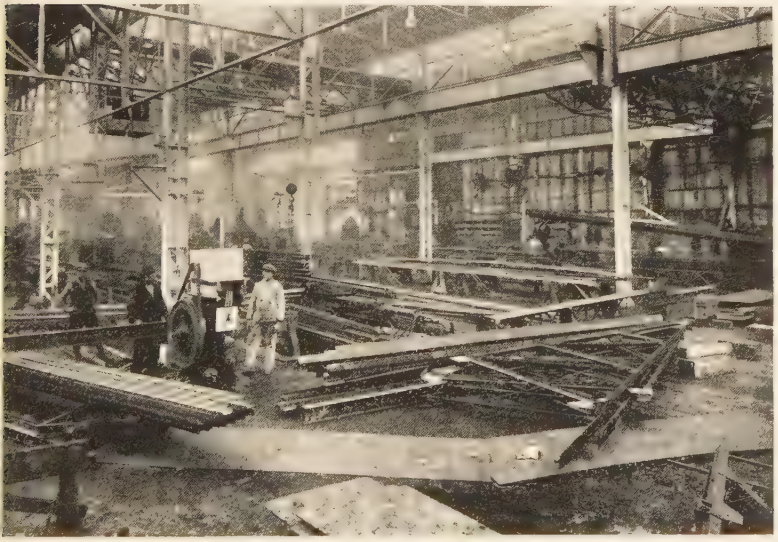
On returning to the hotel we find a message from Cardinal Luçon asking us to come and see him. He greets us cordially, and as he sits facing the light we notice how shockingly he has aged since our visit late in September, 1917. There is a settling of his figure and a deliberateness of movement, the physical penalty he has paid for fighting on in a city noisy with tumult of bombardment, working with tireless devotion among the population, and tested to the last degree in endurance.

He asks if our Committee still has any Rheims children he sent us. We go over our list of families but the names are unfamiliar to him.

"During the war," he says, "I had time to go among my people. I knew most of them individually, and their needs. Now I have so much to do in administrative work that I cannot, unfortunately, continue the personal relation with my people."

He speaks of their courage in trying to restore normal conditions while they live in damp, leaky cellars of destroyed houses.

Empty Space in the Foreground Shows Site of a Metal Working Factory Razed to the Ground, Rheims



Rebuilt Factory on Same Spot 1919

"I am a bit favored myself in having coal." With a gesture he signifies that he considers his apartment well heated, although we are shivering.

We ask about the cathedral. He replies:

"We have recently completed covering the damaged portion of the roof, 5500 square feet, with *tôle ondulée.* This was a task of many months, but the interior will now be protected from rain and snow. We plan to restore the cathedral as a church, but it would be practically impossible to find workmen fit to cope with the delicate task of replacing the detail, even though plaster casts exist of most of the statues. Fortunately, we were able to save the stained-glass windows, the church treasures and the tapestries. They are still in Paris but will shortly be replaced. But the tapestries and other valuables in the Archbishopric were all destroyed."

As we get up to take our leave he says:

"At the left entrance as you face the cathedral look for the headless figure that used to be La Sourire."

Then he adds, "Our repairs will have progressed sufficiently to permit us to celebrate Christmas Mass in La Chapelle de la Vièrge. Perhaps you will be able to return for it."

CHAPTER IV

ALONG THE ROAD

ACTIVITIES seen in passing glimpses between Rheims and Soissons are domestic and practical. These broad fields are adapted for American tractors and many are ready for spring planting.

Soissons in ruins is in terrible contrast with 1917, when a bombed house was the exception. "*Boulangerie de Paris*" is close by a mass of débris. A huge bus with a sign, "*Service de Paris pour visiter les Champs de Bataille*" gives a discordant note. In the courtyard of the hotel "Croix d'Or" we look up at the rooms which in 1917 were made lively by bombing. Nothing is left of them. The same landlady who told us then in a musical voice to "*Decendez au cave*" receives us now. The roof is very jagged and but a few rooms under it are intact. We have an excellent lunch at a reasonable price.

We fail to locate one of our families at the address given, and Priscilla goes to the large impos-

ing, untouched *Mairie* to make inquiries. With glass in the windows and a standing statue intact in the courtyard it has a curiously *nouveau riche* appearance. An Anamite postman in French uniform comes up to take letters from the mail box and a group of French and Chinese officers are talking together.

Our minds go back to the time when we had seen moving masses of troops and artillery in these streets. Philomene F—— had come to us from Soissons in 1916. The mother and boy were behind the German lines, and there had been no news of them since the war. The father was fighting. Madame Macherez, who acted as *maire* of Soissons during the invasion, had sent us this little girl of twelve, with the message;—

"By nature a calm child, she is still suffering from fear, particularly at night, the result of all she has seen of war in this bombarded district."

She had sent us a number of other children also. The last we had heard of Madame Macherez she was managing a Red Cross hospital here after being relieved of her arduous duties as *maire*. When the Germans entered Soissons and demanded the civil authorities, she replied with dignity, "*Le Maire c'est moi*," and her splendid record in the office inspired respect.

Priscilla returns, having secured the address we want. The mother of our boy is at present on a farm in the Seine-et-Marne.

On leaving Soissons, *en route* for Vic-Sur-Aisne, we pass a large agricultural station,—horses, lumber and implements in great quantity, and the spirit of what we call American hustle seems to permeate Soissons and its environs. In the broad fields are green-coated prisoners using American tractors, and nearby a few French graves.

We stop at Blérancourt, the center of the "American Committee for Devastated France." Their program includes intensive work among the children and helping mothers meet their daily problems. Their agricultural assistance has been particularly successful in a region where destruction was nearly complete and where the population had for the second time been forced to flee. Dispensaries, nurses, storehouses of furniture, clothing, provisions and livestock, are a part of their equipment.

After leaving Blérancourt, we take the road for Nampcel to find Comtesse d'Evray, whose dramatic story had been told us by Major Greene. Guided by a small boy into a very narrow, muddy road, we enter a semi-circular farm courtyard. A few chickens, pigs and cows make a cosy farm scene in spite of the destruction on all sides.

Repaired Barn Outside of Soissons

Household Necessities Distributed by French Red Cross in Montdidier

On the extreme right, a broad staircase leads to the open sky. This is all that remains of the farmhouse on the upper level. To the left, is a series of shelters cut into the hillside which had been part of an old quarry.

We are received by a peasant couple. The old woman expects Madame la Comtesse to return at any moment; would we wait? She asks us into her kitchen-living room, unlighted except from the open door, and a dim glow from the stove on which the *pot au feu* simmers. The old man lights a candle and we are aware of highly polished cooking utensils and three rabbit skins on the wall.

"We are preparing a lining for Madame la Comtesse's coat," he explains.

They take us to Madame's "apartments," consisting of one small room dug out of the solid earth and no light, no air, except from the doorway. An old desk covered with orderly papers and books, a long pier mirror and a lounge with a faded brocade thrown over it, give an air of refinement.

Just as we decide that we cannot wait any longer, Madame la Comtesse arrives. She supplements the story of her adventures.

"My château was destroyed when the Germans came here in 1914. I wish you could have seen the gypsy wagon in which I lived for three years.

I kept as near as possible to my people and administered to them as *maire*, lawyer, doctor and friend. Fortunately, I had high boots and owned a gun. I was a good shot and often was able to provide partridges and rabbits for the old and the sick. When the Germans evacuated this region in the spring of 1917, owing to the French and British advance in the vicinity of Noyon, I came back, of course. By this time I had lost even the gypsy wagon. I took up my abode in this *abri*, which, as you see, is quite nice. I had been able to accomplish a good deal in bringing the place back to normal farm life when the Germans swept through the region again in 1918. My little boy who was only twelve I sent off into Brittany, but I did not go further than Compiègne. There I lived on my father's estate and planted potatoes in his Henri II garden. Some of the population, fleeing in terror, fearing that the Germans would reach Paris, urged me to leave, but I told them that I would need the potatoes in the early fall, when I expected to return to Nampcel,—which I did in September.

"When the Armistice was signed only five inhabitants had returned. We had had no news of the war for weeks. Major Greene motored over to see me. He called out as he came over

the crest of the hill, '*C'est la victoire.*' I shall never forget the moment. I gasped, and said, 'I think I'll sit down,' and there was silence between us.

"I wish to show you what I have been able to accomplish up to date. Before the war we had 500 people in this village, 150 are now back."

We go with her into the courtyard. She points with pride to one of the farm buildings that had tarred paper to replace the destroyed slate roof.

"Unfortunately, everything is very high in the way of materials and money is difficult to obtain. In many cases one has to pay four or five times the pre-war prices. The work of reconstruction is necessarily slow, due to difficulties in transportation and the inability of the Government to pay full indemnity for war losses. It would take a very wealthy land owner to be able to undertake extensive rebuilding without delay, and few of us are now that," she says laughingly.

"But please admire this group of buildings. The new part is light and the old parts are dark. The work cost 80,000 francs. The Government advanced this as indemnity, according to the law passed in 1919 for helping reconstruction in the devastated regions, but it can do no more for the present. This property was an *abbaye*. Those

steps leading up as if into space formerly led to the terrace where the monks paced up and down reading their breviaries. It is picturesque in ruin. The Germans took everything off with them. These new farm carts I purchased to replace those stolen by the Germans. The blue wheels are cheerful, are they not?

"No, I am no longer *maire*. They elected a man in the recent elections. I am still President of the Agricultural Society, however, and do some relief work in seven villages in the vicinity. My poultry is beginning to be good again. Look at that rooster. You can see by the way he struts about that he knows his kind are still rare birds in this region. You must visit the château. It is not far from here and is such a pretty ruin with ivy growing over it."

She tells us that she is on her way to an agricultural meeting and asks us to accompany her. We did not have time. Our motor was about to start and Priscilla has just remarked, "What a pity she was not reëlected *maire*, surely there is nothing a mere man could do that our 'lady of the gypsy wagon' is incapable of doing," when she suddenly appears, out of breath, at the upper level of her farm, calling out, "I don't seem to be able to crank my car. Could your chauffeur help me?"

Comtesse d'Evray in the Doorway of her "Abri" Home, Nampcel

Clemenceau and his Staff in Noyon directly after the Armistice

As we enter Noyon we wonder what has become of the Lieutenant who viséd our papers to permit us to visit the villages released from German occupation in April, 1917. We have not forgotten his description of being permitted by his General to lead the troops into Noyon since he belonged to the region. He had told us of the Germans in their retreat deporting women up to the last moment, of cellars having been flooded, then machine guns turned against the inhabitants driven from these flooded cellars.

Immediately after the Armistice, in coming through Noyon, we were surprised to find that the town had disappeared in the 1918 fighting. Instead of the sign "Noyon" there was merely a big arrow pointing out of the town as if to say, "You can't stay here." We had stopped to ask a man with a push-cart the direction to Compiègne. Looking up with a dazed expression, "Compiègne!" he repeated dully. "I have just come back. This hole in the ground was my house. And my wife is not here."

Noyon, now, in spite of many destroyed houses and the wrecked cathedral, is quietly pursuing a normal existence. We go at once to call on the Archbishop. He is a tall, stooping figure, with white hair, fine eyes, and a manner of old-time

courtesy marks his cordial welcome. In answer to a question as to the extent of damage to his cathedral, he speaks of it as a "*grande blessée.*"

We ask him if he had been treated with consideration by the enemy. He answers, smilingly:

"They were always suspicious of priests. They said we knew too much and were too patriotic. But if you faced them with courage, they wouldn't dare touch you. And seeing the high esteem in which I was held by my people they stood somewhat in awe of me themselves. My people have suffered so much that the church now has a stronger hold on them, and since we have shared bad times together my relations with them have become more personal and intimate. They consult me about the details and problems of reestablishing themselves in their damaged homes. They are quite ingenious in working out makeshift contrivances."

He describes how the Germans had sent a special official from Berlin during the occupation who, with the help of soldiers, had opened his private vaults at the bank and after cataloguing the list of his securities and bonds, took them away, remarking, "You see, Monseigneur, we are not thieves. It is all done systematically."

The only regret that he expresses at this ca-

lamity is that since then he has no longer been able to help his people from his personal means.

He emphasizes the vitality and energy of his people and his faith in them. He tells us that 4000 out of 7000 inhabitants have returned. His strikingly strong personality, cultured and refined, makes it easy to understand how he has been able to weld together the various factions in his community.

As we rise to leave, he says:

"You might have stayed in America in comfort, doing nothing, amusing yourselves. Instead of that, you come here to brave the hardships of the north, to help French children. I thank you."

We stop at Sermaize to visit a small church being restored by money raised by the National Institute of Architects. The destruction of the church of Sermaize has not been as extensive as in many others. With the exception of two jagged shell holes the roof is practically intact. Stripped bare of its woodwork and furniture, it seems cold and cheerless until we come to the altar. The images and flowers in vases are in strange contrast with the boxes of mortar and workmen's tools on the floor. The tiles have been made true and the floor neatly swept. Here presently would come the folk of this hamlet to seek the consola-

tion of religious comfort to help them face their daily hardships.

As we glance back at the church, our eyes rest upon a cross which stands high. In front of it is a funeral wreath. We read—"*A leurs ainés morts pour la Patrie les jeunes reconnaissants.*"

Just before reaching Ferme d'Attiches, we notice a significant French grave with a helmet above it. This hill was held by the French. In spite of twenty-one attacks in one day the Germans failed to wrest it from them.

We turn off sharply on a road to the left to reach Plessis-de-Roye. Nothing now remains of the château formerly belonging to the Duke de Condé, except part of the wall profusely covered with ivy and lichen. We go through the wood where 600 Germans were killed,—the blackness of the trees accentuated by the frost. In the midst of the ruins of Plessis we notice American machinery.

We speak to a passing peasant about conditions here. He tells us that before the war they had 300 inhabitants. People are now returning. 86 are back, 18 of them children between the ages of 6 and 14. The school is open in a camouflaged army barrack. He goes on to tell us an interesting story of a recent combination ceremony.

"It began with mass, and it was very moving to

One of the 5000 Reopened Schools, Plessis de Roye

In the Oise of the 92,000 Refugees 73,000 have Returned. Many of them Live in this Kind of Makeshift Home

listen to our priest who urged us not to despair at present conditions but to keep on in the future doing as well as we had done in the past. When the mass was finished we picked up our chairs, and, facing the other way, the building became the *Mairie*, and the ceremony was held of inaugurating as *maire* the owner of the destroyed château. His words, like those of the priest, gave us courage and ambition. He made us feel that the *renaissance des foyers* was not an impossibility. See how much has already been accomplished," he says, pointing to new buildings among the ruins.

On our way to Lassigny, grass and tilled fields are on one side of the road, on the other an ammunition dump with cases of large shells in dangerous proximity.

Lassigny was destroyed in fierce hand to hand fighting. Not a single house or wall escaped. Apple-growing has been the chief industry of the region. Orchards are everywhere, the trees in all stages of mutilation. A German prison camp is nearby. A few stone houses have been built from old material. Over a café is a sign "*Au rendez-vous des touristes.*" We go into a little wooden barrack—"*Union des Femmes de France. Poste de Secours.*"

Unfortunately, Mme. Charmand, the head of the *Poste* is away. An assistant, in response to our usual question, says:

"Before the war we were 900 here. Now 370 have come back. There is always the problem of housing to be faced. But, you can see for yourselves, the walls are growing and many of them are high enough to be covered with roofs. Lassigny will get back to normal conditions soon because of the brave spirit of her inhabitants."

At Montdidier the relief work is particularly well done. There is a dispensary and from this as a center 35 villages are cared for. Madame Panas in charge of the "Permanence" is the wife of the famous oculist, a Greek by birth but a naturalized French citizen serving as a nurse during the entire war.

Madame Panas gives a graphic description of meeting returning refugees. She says, "When townspeople were driven from their homes by the advancing enemy they would fill their trunks with their precious family relics and escape by railroad if there were sufficient time. The peasants' method was to take away in carts everything movable about the farm. In the high-wheeled carts, with possibly an old woman or a child driving, you would get glimpses of grain for the horses,

sewing machines, featherbeds, eggs, chickens, all in mixed confusion."

She speaks of the courage of the school teachers who in the face of constant bombardment remained at their posts. Besides teaching children in cellars they organized ambulance service and did civil administrative work.

CHAPTER V

FRENCH COMMITTEES

We are late in reaching Peronne and find the "Hôtel St. Claude" has rooms for us. The streets are filled with trucks and all sorts of British equipment.

After dinner Priscilla gets out her typewriter and places it on a long table in the little salon. There is a rather pudgy-looking dark man sitting at the table reading. We ask him if it will disturb him if we work.

"Not at all," he replies, half rising and bowing. He is interested at once in the Corona and watches us with a persistent, disconcerting gaze.

The proprietor comes in, sits down beside this man and produces a pack of cards. They start a game by the light of a smoky oil lamp. The landlady joins the group and we suddenly become aware that in devoting ourselves to describing past events we are losing the opportunity of chronicling present ones. Priscilla says

to the dark man, "How did the *boches* behave here?"

He looks at her a moment, then answers:

"My wife knew suffering. I have a German name. My great-grandfather was German. That's not very near, but four times they brought me before the *Conseil de Guerre* to prove me a *boche* to make me fight for them. They couldn't do it so they put me in prison. I slept on the floor without straw. I had no soap. You had a right to it, and when you asked for it they gave it but as soon as you turned your back they would take it from you." The dark man loses the game of cards.

The proprietor remarks, "You were talking too much to the ladies"; then turning to us, "the Germans came to Peronne on August 8, 1914. They left in the first week of September, but they came back again September 24th. This time they stayed for two and a half years, until February, 1917. Later in that year they came again and on the 18th of July, they sent away many of the inhabitants. I never forget these dates.

"There were 4500 inhabitants before the war. 2000 have returned. Peronne was a rich bourgeois town. With the exception of sugar factories on the outskirts of the *canton*, the activities were farming, chiefly the cultivation of beet root. Be-

fore the war we had more motors per inhabitant than any other town in France. The people feel they can never get just reparation for their losses. The schools are open. The French Red Cross runs them. The 'Région Libéree' have furnished barracks to the families. We had no newspapers here during the occupation except the '*Gazette des Ardennes*,' full of lies."

The dark man, called Monsieur Wold by the proprietor, speaks again. "When my wife had no news of me for over a year, she believed me dead. Since I didn't work for the *boches* they wouldn't allow me any packages or letters. This was done to 'break my morale.' I saw French mutilate themselves rather than work in the mines for the *boche*. It didn't do any good. They would be sent to the hospital for a few days and then forced down into the mines again. The Prussian is a brute and the Fourth Army Corps was the worst prison camp in Prussia. I know because I was there."

A girl comes in, seats herself at the piano, and begins to play. The landlady says:

"The music is all right that my girl is playing. But when the *boches* were here I had little sleep for eighteen months. Forty-five of their officers lodged in this hotel. They had music until two

or three o'clock every night, two pianos, cellos and Victor machines all going at once.

"They made me furnish them food—7,000 repasts altogether I gave and never one franc of payment. I paid out 35,000 francs, then I had no more money. When I could no longer get credit from the tradespeople, the *Commandant* put a *boche* civilian to be in charge of the hotel. They always gave me receipts for the food. As they were short of paper, they used old French newspapers and magazines on which to write these receipts. But they didn't allow anything for the rooms and I had to pay for the laundry, for the linen and for the soap.

"While I was down in the cellar during a bombardment the *boche* brought *camions* and carried away all my furniture, kitchen utensils, door knobs, keys, brass and copper. For forty years my husband and I have worked. We sacrificed two years to stay here to protect our property, but now our possessions are gone. We do not know when we can get any indemnity.

"From June 24 to July 8, 1916, during the Somme offensive, we were ordered out by the enemy. Only two hours' notice is given. You look around at familiar objects. You do not know what to take. The first time one bears up,

but when they came back in 1918, to go through it the second time was hard, a thousand times worse than the first time. We were repatriated through Evian.

"My daughter-in-law managed to stay a year longer in captivity in order to keep these receipts for money owed us. The *boches* searched for them, but they never found them. She had a trunk with a double bottom. A few I brought with me but the rest were buried at Le Cateau. I found them intact last July."

The husband interrupts with—"It won't be me or my wife who will get the benefit of that indemnity. It will be our little girl there. The '*Bas de Laine*' used to be a bank that every woman possessed but now they are all open at the toes. There is nothing in them."

Monsieur Wold puts in, "Everything the *boches* did was without conscience. They made people of Peronne get into carts and eat beet root, then photographed them and sent the pictures into Germany to show that the French were starving."

The landlady says, "In 1870 two houses only out of twenty were damaged in the regions where the fighting was. Now there are whole departments in which almost nothing remains." She goes out of the room and returns with a bundle.

"These are the papers the Germans gave me." She fingers them with a look in her eyes as if she doubted they would ever be of value.

Monsieur Wold remarks, "Although each individual in France who has been a sufferer in the war is perhaps discontented, fortunately, the Frenchman is never a Bolshevist."

The woman adds, confidently, as she gathers together her papers, "The economy of France will make her come back quickly."

The door opens. A young couple enter. Becoming landlady again, she says, "*Une chambre à deux lits, c'est entendu, Madame,*" and follows them into the hall.

As we go out of the room we hear Monsieur Wold murmur: "*Cochons, cochons,*" but we know he is not referring to us.

In coming into Peronne we had not seen many signs of rebuilding, and the whole aspect was rather dreary. We are glad to have our last impression of the town, as we leave it the next morning, entirely different. We go through a quarter practically rebuilt. Even the *pavé* streets are new. There is a general atmosphere of comfort and the people we meet look alert and cheerful.

After leaving Peronne, we pass deserted barracks of a German prison camp on a hill; just

beyond, a *maison roulante*, and a steam roller on the road. This is back area. The fields are under cultivation and hay is being stacked.

At Athies we stop to look up one of our families. The village is partly destroyed; cows tended by German prisoners, white hens making themselves comfortable on top of haystacks, farm wagons in good condition, are signs of gradual recuperation. This has been a charming town with an unusually beautiful church, impressive even in its damaged condition.

The father and mother of our children were both killed by a shell falling on their house. The children had reached us, after being evacuated through Evian. Madame Carlier, aunt of the children, says:

"In August, 1914, the Germans entered Athies. It was at this time that the children's parents were killed. My husband and I were sent into Germany with the children. When the Germans retreated from this region in 1917, we returned for nine months; then they recaptured Athies in March, 1918, and we were again forced to leave, walking at night through water up to our knees to Amiens, but that's ancient history," she adds cheerfully.

An old man appearing with some cabbages in

Making a Road in Preparation for the New Village

"One Must Work Hard for Cabbages like These," Athies

his hand, is introduced as the children's grandfather. He says:

"I am the patriarch of the village, eighty-four years old, a veteran of 1870, and still active. One must work hard for cabbages like this."

We visit the Red Cross Station (S.B.M.), recently established. Mademoiselle Bellisseu in charge says:

"There is a good deal of illness and no doctor. We supply household utensils free to returned refugees but make a small charge for clothing. The *boches* forced the girls of the town to work. One delicate girl of seventeen was made to go into the forest and cut wood. That woman waiting for me to dress her hand had to sweep streets for three months as punishment for some insignificant infringement of their rules. We had 1200 people here before the war, now 600 have returned."

We stop at Ham to visit the "Friends' Unit," composed of British and Americans. Its members, as experts in construction working under the direction of the "Région Libéree," have already built 80 houses in the Aisne district. The villages of Golancourt, Cugny and Libermont have been given tractors, and the farmers taught how to use them.

Guiscard is dilapidated, but not completely de-

stroyed. There is a scaffold in front of two houses; wooden sheds are being built to replace former outhouses of brick. The patching up with new material gives a very live appearance to the town.

We go to Baboeuf where Madame Jacques Faure and Madame Menget are in charge of the "Permanence" of the French Red Cross. The Germans took possession of the commune of Baboeuf the 29th of August, 1914. In May, 1917, this *Poste* was established to help the population released after thirty months of German occupation.

"The valley of the Oise did not suffer much in the fighting," Madame Faure tells us, "but the Germans in retreat pillaged it thoroughly, taking off furniture and livestock, destroying farm machinery and setting fire to or mining the villages. During 1917 tractors were at work, and crops had been planted and harvested. In March, 1918, the civilian population was for the second time evacuated. In September, 1918, the Germans had retreated back to the old Hindenburg Line. This time they left complete devastation behind them. High explosives had turned up even the sub-soil. The trees were ruined by gun fire, but again the patient civilians in small groups came back, not waiting for official permission.

Deliberately Destroyed by the Germans

Same House Rebuilt by the "Permanence" of Babœuf

Few houses remained. Cellars were made habitable and rough shacks were built.

"The 'Permanence' opened a *Poste* at Neuflieux and in surrounding places, and the nurses who had been here in 1917 returned. Soon the inhabitants began to arrive in numbers. American and French supplies of linen, farm material and domestic equipment were distributed. Things were sold at a low price where payment was possible. One day there came three wagon loads of seeds, potatoes, beans, chickens and rabbits. There was great excitement, you may be sure.

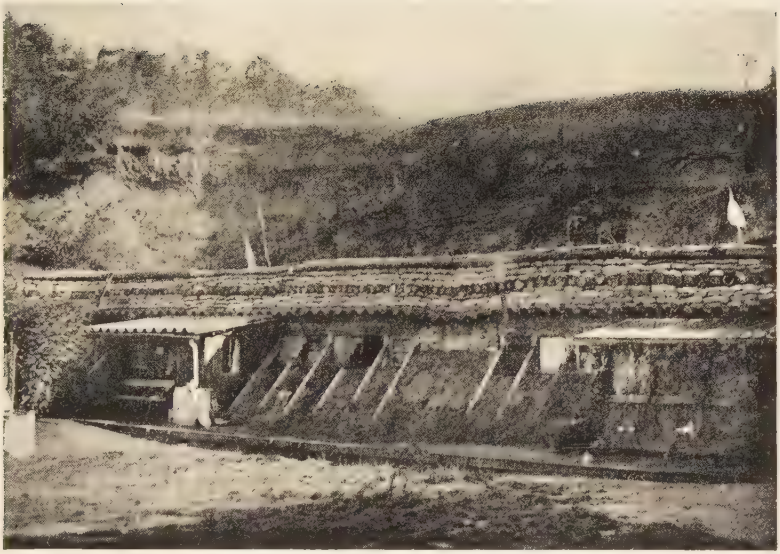
"Before the war, most of the farmers in these villages had owned their property and a number of them had the right to large indemnities. But, temporarily, they were in a hard position with families to feed and no money. The object of our Committee was to assist these people to help themselves, to safeguard their wonderful qualities of energy and initiative which had made this region a part of the agricultural strength of France.

"Twenty-eight prosperous farms were here before the war and our crops were good. Potatoes, beans, beet root and cherries were the important products. From 1914 to 1916, the crops had been taken by the Germans. In 1917, our fields lay idle since the Germans had deported all men

capable of work. In 1918, with a tremendous effort, 80 *hectars* were sown, mostly in grain, but, unfortunately, this crop was lost when the Germans retook the region during March. By January, 1919, we had only 4 *hectars* sown. 496 lay idle, but now, one year later, these figures have been almost reversed, only 50 *hectars* unsown while 450 have been cultivated.

"Our animal record is equally good. Before the war, the *commune* was rich in livestock, principally chickens and rabbits. Ninety out of 95 horses of this village were taken by the enemy. By March, 1918, when the second disaster arrived, we had 22 horses collected. They were lost, but now we have 55. We had 150 cows before the war. Every one of them was taken off. We had collected 33 again with much difficulty by March, 1918, and they too, of course, were lost. By January, 1919, we had 10, but now we have 39. Before the war we owned 1800 fowl. The enemy took them all. By March, 1918, we had again collected 400. These were lost. At the time of the Armistice we had 125, now we have 780. We had 1000 rabbits before the war. All of them were lost, but by January, 1919, we had collected 35. Now we have 842.

"I suppose these figures do not thrill you as they



Former German Shelter where the Marquise de Noailles and her Staff Lived During the Fighting of 1918

Refugee Family Living in the Cellar of the Ruined Château of Folembray

do us who know the struggle they represent," she says, half apologetically. "We lost practically all our wagons and agricultural machinery. By the beginning of 1919, only a small part had been replaced. By now, the village has nearly all it needs.

"It was inevitable that work should begin slowly. It will be fully five years before the land can be back in its 'before the war' state, and it will cost a good deal for labor in leveling trenches and holes made by shells. In February, 1919, they sent us some German prisoners to work in the fields. The 'Service Agricole des Régions Dévastées' advanced money against the unpaid indemnity to buy machinery, livestock and seeds. These advances were supplemented by the 'Permanence' which furnished the smaller animals and minor farm machinery.

"The second evacuation was far sadder than the first. I know because I helped in both. I drove my car transporting refugees. I was glad to be here to welcome the people home. Our progress in one year is remarkable and we are an example to the whole department. I will never leave this region until assistance is no longer needed, nor will Madame Manget."

A steam roller is at work on the road in the

vicinity of Nesles, and there are many houses being rebuilt. This town is in strong contrast with the state in which it was after the 1918 fighting.

It is quite dark when we reach Chauny. There are few towns that have had a more tragic history. Formerly prosperous with important glass factories, after three years of occupation, the enemy, in retreat, dynamited the town and deported 8,000 of the 11,000 inhabitants. The 3,000 remaining lived huddled together in a little suburb, Ognes. As we pass through, attracted by a light, we go into a little shop, filled with post cards and the curious collection of articles that one sees in the shops in the devastated area, among a few necessities, many cheap ornaments and vanities.

The shopkeeper says: "The 4,000 inhabitants returned from Germany since the Armistice are now in Ognes also and living conditions are crowded. Unfortunately, nothing yet has been done to Chauny. The task is so big, no one has the courage to begin," she adds, sighing.

We leave her shop and go through the destroyed town; not a light, not a building under construction, not a growing thing. Chauny is the first town we have been in that shows no progress. It is still silent and desolate as on our last trip, just

"Poste de Secours" at Neuflieux, Aisne

The Most Popular Corner in Folembray

after the departure of the Germans, when the only living thing we saw was a butterfly.

At Folembray is the *Poste* established by La Marquise de Noailles. During the war she started an *œuvre* to furnish supplies to military hospitals. After the Armistice she came to Folembray with her staff and began to distribute beds, kitchen utensils and furniture. She sells groceries and clothing at nominal prices, and supplies the inhabitants with agricultural machinery and cattle. There is a well-equipped hospital with an operating room and a coöperative shop. Conspicuous in the little town are the ruins of a château.

"That is where I lived before the war," she says, "and this is where we live now," pointing to a neat wooden shack. She also shows us a German shelter where she and her staff lived through the winter of 1918, in danger from bombardment, but never deserting their work. The church, the post office, the former hospital, all in ruins, give evidence of having been splendid buildings.

"But don't look at them," she says, "only at the new buildings. We have a new grocery shop. One story of it is completed. The former schoolhouse was a fine building but we get along very well in our present quarters in this wooden shack. Within the last month some prize cattle arrived

from England, and our poultry business is really on its feet."

Pointing to a cemetery nearby, she says:

"That these should not have fallen in vain, we work."

CHAPTER VI

CHEMIN DES DAMES

We arrive at Laon after 8 o'clock, and go to the American Red Cross post where we are put up over night. Major Henry Copley Greene, our host, is delegate for the Aisne district and during the war has become a part of the French life in the region. He has worked consecutively with the same French committees to a greater extent than any other American, perhaps. His intimate knowledge of France, and his speaking the language have added to his capacity for usefulness. From the *maire* to the youngest child and oldest woman in the villages of which he is in charge, all rely upon him as a friend who never fails in any emergency.

Up to 10 o'clock workers straggle in from outlying districts, telling us interesting experiences, and cheerful in spite of a fatiguing day. A "Région Libéree" delegate gives us some useful information.

When Major Greene mentions the names of

French committees covering Festieux, Corbiny, Chermizy and other villages in the *canton* of Craonne, we are amazed that any inhabitants are back, living in this desolate waste. We recall our last visit there when we climbed to the top of the plateau of Craonne with a French sentry. It was late in the afternoon. A French woman was trying to identify her husband's grave. Some bodies brought in from the fields were being lowered into the earth. We had come up on a winding road from which the rubbish had been cleared. This and a signboard "Craonne" were the only indications that a town had ever been there. A few tufts of grass and poppies had sprung up in the top soil which in the churning process of the earth had remained. The chirp of a cricket brought before the imagination the village life formerly on this hillside, but there were no signs of living things, nor attempts to reclaim land, and the other villages were in the same condition,—all but obliterated.

"If you don't mind an early start, I'll take you to visit some of my friends in the canton of Craonne," says Major Greene. "The Hindenburg Line and devastation no longer reign supreme. In every direction are successful attempts to reclaim land. I want to investigate an old farmer. One of my workers reported she had found him

Plateau of Craonne

Present Home of Monsieur and Madame de Verneuil

living in a dugout. He is sixty years old and very cheerful. He said the authorities had told him not to come back, as the land was not usable. He declared that although his land was churned up he could work it, and moreover there was the advantage of using his neighbor's land since he had not returned. He said that after he had gotten the shells moved away and the edges of the craters softened a little, his cow went down and came up without difficulty, grazing in stubble that had sprung up. He had proudly displayed some good-looking turnips that had come from his garden."

We are shown into our respective bedrooms and are appalled at their condition. There is no glass in the windows, only large sheets of heavy brown paper, loosely fitted in. Even trench coats, many rugs, sweaters and hot-water bottles fail to keep the cold from penetrating to our marrows.

We make an early start, in a Ford with the top down, in spite of a snowstorm. Laon was evacuated by the enemy hastily at a late date in the war. The little damage done was by bombs from Allied planes.

On leaving for the Craonne plateau, with trees, fields and buildings unharmed, there is no trace of war except for débris and munition dumps by

the roadside. The scene changes abruptly, however, in climbing the ridge above Festieux. Without preparation, one is in the midst of absolute devastation. We get out and walk towards two tiny wooden huts, built among ruins. Major Greene remarks:

"My experience with French aristocrats is that they forget themselves in working for their people. Monsieur and Madame de Verneuil are an example of this. The trees here were centuries old and their château and estate famous. They lost everything,—furniture, old books, valuables and family heirlooms. But let's go in. It's more worth while to hear them talk than me."

Knocking at the door, we are bidden to enter, and we find Madame de Verneuil sitting at table with her Curé, having just finished coffee, the chalice on an improvised altar showing that Communion had been celebrated. She has an interesting personality, full of strength and magnetism.

"I wish my husband were here to tell you about his return in April, 1919. Trains were not running, so he made the trip on horseback. For the first month he slept on straw in one of the ruined farm buildings. Later, lorries transported enough building material to erect these huts where we are now living. During the war I was a nurse in the

Hospital at Châlons-sur-Marne, but I joined him soon after his return."

Our hostess suggests taking us over the estate.

"Wait while I put on my very ancient hat and *sabots*," she laughs.

As we pass a shed in which were some workmen, she comments:

"*Des braves gens.* They have been with us through everything. By August last, 2000 out of the 9500 people belonging in the canton had struggled back. Almost daily now someone gets home."

She points to a bit of red in the rose arbor. "The last color this season. Even my flowers try loyally not to desert me."

Looking at our camera, "Will you photograph me with my oldest child and baby?" she asks.

As she sees our puzzled expressions she nods towards a large shell, with a small one beside it, one a 480, the other a 75,—"The only ones that did not explode out of a hundred which fell here." Then, her face becoming serious, adds, "Five times my husband came back to fight in his home region. He said to me one day, 'To destroy trees that I have known since childhood was not easy.' When the Germans arrived they thought they saw devils. It was only my poor kangaroos in the garden try-

ing to save themselves. I am glad the Germans were afraid of them."

We walk on, slushing through the snow and mud. Suddenly, she stops among ruins and says simply:

"You see the château."

Shells exploding in the distance make dreary smoke on the desolate wastes which surround us.

"Can you imagine in this desolate spot a park with deer and *grandes allées* like Versailles?" she sighs; then, smiling, adds: "Those wild duck are enjoying themselves in my shattered Louis XV basin. *Eh bien!* we will return by *le nouveau château.*"

Passing a bit of beautiful grille work lying prostrate, ivy growing over it as if to soften the disaster, we come to a foundation and a few feet of stone work above the ground where workmen are busy. She says:

"It will be comfortable and adequate. We have gone back a step and are now quite a wild country, and must begin over again. Our people are showing great courage. It is difficult for Americans, who are so far away, to realize what the war has done to France and how long it will take to repair the damage, and since Americans can never really understand we appreciate all the

more what they are doing to help us. My husband and I are seldom absent more than a few days at a time. Our people need us."

For a moment her face in repose is very sad; then, with animation, she continues, "Be sure to ask *Monsieur le Curé* about his American mule. *His* problem of transportation is solved by it."

As we get into the motor and start off, she calls out, "Come back next summer. Nature and my workmen will have accomplished a great deal."

"I wish Monsieur de Verneuil had been there, also," says Major Greene, as we bump along over a badly cut up road. "He's as fine as she. They came back to nothing and began at once to restore their property as nearly as possible to its former state, thus encouraging their people to do the same. And this after five years of war service and hospital work! The other big property owners are back, also."

He points to a hill, black and forbidding, with nothing to suggest a former château and park:

"That belonged to Monsieur de Hedouville. Madame was nursing French soldiers in the cellar and came up to find that the Germans had captured the place. Their son died as a result of hardship and maltreatment at Laon. Monsieur de Hedouville is a refined, delicate man, of the type

no one would be rude to, and yet German officers handled him roughly, threatening to shoot him if they discovered he had hidden anything. After the Armistice he wished to live as near his former house as possible, and is now acting as *maire* in the town of Foulon.

"Then there's de Villiers and his wife, who belonged to Guise. They happened to be away visiting at the beginning of the war. They asked the enemy to repatriate them back to Guise. This request was granted, and they both did medical work during the occupation. I could tell you of many other instances, but here we are at Chermizy."

The Curé meets us at the entrance. He had put on his Croix de Guerre, thus making a fête day of our visit.

"In Chermizy," he says, "we have 50 out of 200 inhabitants back. They are living in *des trous sous terre*. Out of the 43 villages in the once lovely valley of the Ailette only three are fairly intact. The German troops entered this town like barbarians. I protested to their commanding officer: 'My people are hard-working and self-respecting and must be treated decently.' They made me *maire*, and I was here during most of the occupation. Two Generals were quartered in

Former German Dugout now being Used as a Dwelling, Chermizy

The Wheelbarrow Solves the Local Transportation Problem

my house, and once the Kaiser and Crown Prince came."

"What did they do?" we ask with eager interest.

"Demanded the Generals, that was all," replies the Curé. "Finally, I succeeded in being repatriated and joined the army headquarters at Villers Cotterets."

We look at his Croix de Guerre, wishing for details as to his citations, but are not successful in extracting them. The Curé of Chermizy talks but little of himself, and with adroitness changes the subject when it becomes personal.

A casual passer-by would not have known that any human being was living in this wrecked community except for an occasional curl of smoke issuing from a stovepipe in the hillside, or from a lean-to erected against some supporting wall of ruins. We climb an embankment white with snow to reach a line of German dugouts transformed into dwellings. The Curé knocks at a door. A woman opens it.

"You find me installed in my *jolie maison*," she laughs. She tells us her story, not as a complaint but because we draw it from her.

She had been away two years, returning last September.

"Why didn't you wait until the spring to return?" we ask.

"I had been away so long, it was time to get home," she answers.

We make a number of visits to dugouts. Each one is different, but the welcome and courage are everywhere the same. The Curé remarks as he leads us back to the main street:

"The courage of my people makes up for lack of comfort, but without committees to furnish equipment and Government *ravitaillement* living might have been hard."

He stands for a moment looking at a fragment of a wall, with crosses darkened by exposure in the graveyard behind it.

"The church," he says simply; "not one remains intact in my canton. Mass is held in barracks. Centuries of constructive work lost in a few moments of enemy vindictiveness!"

Then, as if determined to be cheerful, he continues, "Our baker arrived home last week; the village was *en fête*. He is happy to be back and sings at his work. And next to the bakery a shed has been rebuilt by its former owner and his hay stacked for the winter.

"And this is the *Mairie*," he says proudly, stopping before a wooden hut of simple structure.

Posters on it advise voters concerning the coming elections.

"The Socialists in this region will be defeated. Our people are sensible," he adds.

To our surprise the Curé invites himself to accompany us. Settled comfortably on the back seat between us he munches chocolate we furnish him.

We mount rapidly, on a road that anything more than a Ford would have refused to consider passable. Major Greene reminds us of the naming of the Chemin des Dames. The daughters of Louis XV used to visit at the château of La Comtesse de Narbonne, and in honor of their coming over this road it was called Chemin des Dames. As we reach the top, the plank roads disappear.

We stop at Hurtibese, one of the famous heights from a military point of view. The loss of the Chemin des Dames in May, 1918, was a serious blow. In the fall of 1917, the French captured Fort Mal Maison at the end of it overlooking Laon. This would have given them an opportunity to bring the fighting into the open if the Italians had not collapsed. White trunks of dead birch trees stand out like crosses. Occasionally, partridges disturbed by our approach, rise and disappear down the Aisne valley. They seem to have taken possession of this deserted country. In places the undergrowth

has sprung up on the edges of shell holes and trenches, Nature seeming always to make an effort to cover the scars of battle as soon as possible.

"Sheep can be grazed here. They are trying to get some," Major Greene remarks.

Hill No. 108 is on our right as we descend into the Aisne valley through land which forms a series of amphitheaters. On reaching the road below we are struck with the photographic possibilities of four women, one of them pushing a wheelbarrow on which is a heavy sack. They are walking along in a delightful procession as we approach them, but when we stop the car and they begin to pose all charm vanishes. The oldest one turns to the Curé and says:

"Please tell the ladies that we wish to do what they want, but not all to explain different things at the same time."

As we look into the faces of these old women we feel that even if the Germans reimburse in indemnity their war losses, they can never pay for the loss in health caused by the shock of their flight in the face of terrible bombardments, nor for their wanderings among strangers, nor for the sapping of their vitality from living in dark, damp cellars, nor for the aches in their bones as they trudge long distances to get the meager necessities of existence.

We stop in the village of Verneuil, where there is a station of the "Permanence"; Mademoiselle des Brosses is in charge. When we speak of the splendid work she is doing, she replies:

"We do what we can. We are of the country, *que voulez vous?*"

In a little shack nearby we find an American dentist, with breezy manner, and sleeves rolled up. She tells us that she and her assistants have filled the teeth of more than 1100 people in this vicinity since the Armistice, "and still going strong," she adds.

As we approach a destroyed village with no signs of life, the Curé tells us that his mule is waiting.

"I have a lunch engagement," he explains, as he gets out and shakes hands with each one of us.

We will always picture the Curé of Chermizy riding through his stricken villages on his mule, caring for his people, and interesting himself in the homely details of their lives—practical, although a saint. With a man like this, it is not what he says, but what he is that counts.

In coming back to Laon from the other side, the villages through which we pass were protected by the hills while the shell fire raked the heights, and the autumn on trees intact, symbolic with red and gold, seems a promise of spring in the Chemin des Dames.

CHAPTER VII

ST. QUENTIN

We are on our way to St. Quentin. On the road we stop to speak to an old man who has a stove on a wheelbarrow. A woman and a dog are with him.

"Where were you during the German occupation?" we ask.

"*Chez nous*," the man replies; "they treated the Curé and the *maire* badly, but the peasants fairly well. We were driven out by bombardment and wandered about until the Armistice. When we got home, it was like this," pointing to ruins. "We are living in an *abri* now. We had no stove and it was very cold. This one has been given to us to-day by the American Red Cross."

They are delighted at their good fortune. We offer them chocolate.

"Chocolate, *tiens!*" says the old lady. "This is something we haven't had in four years. An American stove and chocolate in the same day!"

Care-Takers of the Ruined Château Still on Duty

Living in a Lean-to but at Home

We go to inspect the mighty ruins of the Jepy Steel Mills at Beautor, a suburb of La Fère. The man who shows us about tells us that this steel mill was one of the most modern and best equipped in Europe. It escaped destruction from bombardment, but in their final retreat the Germans had dynamited it the day before the Armistice.

"The enemy was thorough," he says several times, as he points out each machine in the building systematically mined.

When we reach an American grinding machine of great weight and value, now useless, we are filled with indignation. The bridges and huge cranes, twenty-six meters in length, and weighing twenty-five tons, look gigantic in ruin. We are appalled at the magnitude of it all.

"No town was quicker in removing the rubbish after the Armistice than ours. We got some trucks and everyone worked hard. You have seen how few of our buildings escaped destruction. One of the bridges of our mills was saved from the disaster and is to be sent to the Ateliers de Sedan to be used in a factory under construction. Only one crane is capable of being repaired and that is to go there, also."

His last words, after thanking us for coming, are:

"Normal conditions will soon be restored in La Fère. Our people hate inaction."

There is a long stretch over the plain to St. Quentin. We stop at Vendeuil, where there is a little "Poste de Secours" in a village with nothing intact in the way of a house. A camouflaged army barrack is used as a school. We draw around a warm stove while waiting for tea. Mademoiselle Giffley, in charge, tells us that the people have suffered a great deal.

"A present from the *maire*," she remarks as she offers us some grapes from a pewter plate in the center of the table.

There are autumn leaves in an *obus* and an air of comfort pervades the place. It is crude, but neat. The girl who is making the tea is a *camion* driver and delivers supplies. She tells us that the Curé comes from a neighboring village Thursdays and Sundays.

"He is very old, more than eighty. He rambles on in the mass, gives the names of the dead and then follows them with the wrong prayer, discovers his mistake, breaks off and says, 'I am confused. Next time I will finish it.' But he is very good and everyone loves him," she adds, as if fearing we thought she was criticizing him. "Many of our younger priests, doctors and school

"All the Comforts of Home"

A Happy Family Living in a Shack

teachers were killed fighting, which makes it difficult now."

As we approach St. Quentin we are impressed with the atmosphere of general activity everywhere and the ingenuity with which wheels are used to furnish transportation. Wagons filled with débris are passing in constant procession. When we had been in the town directly after the Armistice the lack of motion in the streets was noticeable.

Memory recalls two convoys from St. Quentin that we saw arriving in Evian in the fall of 1917. They were mostly men with a few nuns and some children. As they got out from the train and walked down the platform, they were all singing the *Marseillaise;* even the nuns joined in, though they looked so frail one felt a breath of wind could blow them away. There were children so motionless that we wondered if they were still alive.

In our office "St. Quentin" meant building up children and straightening out shattered nerves.

We leave our luggage at the Hôtel de France and start out into the streets. Two civilians in long black coats and black hats are carrying a large sack between them; well dressed people everywhere are doing menial jobs. The Hôtel de Ville is picturesque with the light shining on details of remnants of past glory.

We go to pay our respects to Madame Hugues, who had been head of the French Red Cross during the German occupation. We find her and two nurses, in dark capes and veils, seated at a large table, lighted by a hanging lamp. Madame Hugues is an old woman with a wrinkled face but bright, sparkling eyes full of vitality and mischief. She does most of the talking. One of the nurses is Flemish in type with rosy cheeks; the other is pale and delicate, with a soft voice. The whole scene, in the dim light, looks like a Rembrandt. These nurses typify the many who remained in occupied towns or under enemy fire at ambulance stations in Rheims, Soissons, St. Quentin, Noyon and other dangerous places, thinking of the wounded, not of themselves. Fifty-six thousand of them have been scattered through France.

Madame Hugues says: "St. Quentin is making every effort to get back to normal as soon as possible. Our schools are now running and we have over 3000 children in them with a canteen service for the delicate ones. We have an organized system of visiting nurses in connection with the maternity hospital. Things are difficult, of course. There is a shortage of milk. We have no cows, because we have no fodder for them, and our supply of powdered milk is limited."

One of the nurses says: "Tell the Americans what the *boches* were like."

"I was here during the four years of occupation, but I was so busy caring for our soldiers in the hospitals that I didn't pay any attention to the enemy," says Madame Hugues.

She describes the entrance of the French troops.

"We heard the cannon get nearer and nearer, the noise of the Germans retreating grew more and more distant, then—silence. We came up from our cellars and saw our soldiers marching through the streets."

She takes us through her former salons now filled with shelves containing sweaters, stockings and linen.

"She is over sixty-five," one of the nurses murmurs, "but her energy and courage have never faltered. She's kept us all going."

We visit the *maire* at the Hôtel de Ville. He says:

"I am always glad to welcome Americans and have them know how much St. Quentin has suffered. Our industries were seriously damaged. Our largest sugar factory was destroyed and we lost 7000 embroidery looms. But conditions are improving. We have turned the corner."

He apologizes for having only a few minutes

to spare for us as he has eleven marriage ceremonies to perform during the morning. We remark that we would be interested to see some of the communicating cellars under the Square which the Germans lived in. The *maire* presents to us Monsieur Flinois who offers to escort us. We are impressed with his immaculate appearance in a dark jacket, short trousers, leather leggings, felt hat and cane.

We arrive at a deep hole, looking down into blackness. Monsieur Flinois orders the *boche* prisoner, furnished by the *maire*, to dig an entrance for us. We are pressed for time and ask:

"Isn't there a larger place?"

"They are all alike; we will try another," he replies.

As the *boche* begins to clear away the snow and débris from the entrance a woman with a market basket on her arm pauses, seeing us grouped around this ruin.

"What are you doing here?" she asks.

We explain that we wish to see the cellar below, whereupon she replies:

"It is my cellar; shall I show it to you? It takes some courage now to enter my house."

A sharp, slippery descent of a dozen steps brings s to the upper basement. We distinguish the

skeleton of a piano and some broken chairs. The woman stands silent for a moment then, with a hurried apology, departs as if she can't bear the scene any longer. The floor is littered with hand grenades and tangled wires which we are warned not to touch. Monsieur Flinois remarks:

"It is really unsafe in here, and it seems to me it would be folly to cross underground to the opposite side of the Square, but, of course, if you wish it . . ."

It is a relief to come up to the daylight. We go to see the cathedral which was built by Charlemagne in the 13th century. The roof is smashed, the nave badly damaged, the wonderful old glass of the period completely destroyed, and everywhere there are signs of fire. Monsieur Flinois points out to us where dynamite had been placed under each column.

"Fortunately, the British and French officers arrived October 2, 1918, in time to prevent this crowning disaster. The enemy melted the metal from the organ pipes before leaving."

The famous triptych has vanished, and before its empty niche we pause to read: "*Visiteurs: sans aucune necessité d'ordre militaire les allemands en leur dernier recul de 1918 ont fait sauter par une mine et détruit complètement le caveau de St. Quentin*

bati en 840 et depuis cette époque l'objet de la vénération générale."

Monsieur Flinois continues: "This church is so old and has meant so much, it is hard to accept its destruction. German gunfire destroyed it, not English, as is often said, because the shelling was from the south where the Germans were. At the beginning of the war, all the treasures of our museum, lace and old books, worth at least eighty thousand francs, had been buried in the crypt of the cathedral but, unfortunately, were found by the Germans."

A snowstorm suggests that we are moving north. We pass a milestone with "*Cambrai nord 18 K.*" We have left the Aisne. In our thoughts we pay tribute to the Aisne progress in revival of industrial activities.

The bridges along the road have all been destroyed. Most of the fields are in condition for planting, but through here the *renaissance des foyers* must be from the ground up.

In the ruined villages through which we pass on our way to Douai are many *demi-lune* houses. By the Faubourg de Paris we enter Douai. Laughing boys call out to us noisily. The streets are crowded and Douai looks busy. The shops are filled with good looking meats, provisions and

Rebuilding an Electric Plant—Suburb of Lille

Outskirts of Lille; Industrial Activity being Resumed

domestic equipment. The whole place is active, —a great contrast to the dead town after the Armistice.

Wire entanglements are still in place, however, about the damaged station. A grain elevator in the vicinity has been mined and blown up. We notice two signs on an *estaminet*, "*au retour des poilus*" and "*à la sortie de l'église.*"

On approaching Lille, we pass brightly lighted factories, smoke coming from their chimneys. It is difficult to adjust ourselves quickly to trams running, wheel carts of every description, and shops open even in the poorer quarters. As we swing into the main street we see the houses are repainted; there are curtains ir the windows; and brightly lighted plate-glass shop windows display fruits, *pâtisserie*, flowers, bonbons in attractive boxes, and garments cut in recent styles. There are errand boys carrying boxes from florists.

When a "buttons" at the Hotel Bellevue receives us—the contrast to Armistice days is complete. The well-dressed women with feathers in their hats make us feel like tramps as we enter in our trench coats with sacks of provisions. The same two excitable old ladies are at the desk, however, and there are still no keys to the rooms

given us. But the lift is running and there are porters to handle luggage.

Trim servants busy themselves in making us comfortable in our rooms and we wonder what has become of the old refugee of last year who had to walk up the long flights of stairs bringing jugs of cold water from the basement, since the plumbing, lighting and heating systems were out of gear.

In the brilliantly lighted restaurant, filled with people, a band is playing. Lille has come back!

CHAPTER VIII

LILLE UNDER OCCUPATION

On our visits to our families in Lille we still see evidences of the suffering caused by the German régime, although, of course, very much less than at the time of the Armistice.

We have an introduction to an American who remained in Lille until America came into the war and we decide to get his version of the occupation. He is in charge of a factory situated in a manufacturing suburb of Lille.

In the entrance court are huge German guns. We find Mr. R—— in his office. At first it is difficult to make him talk. To break the ice, we ask:

"Why have you such a collection of German guns in your front yard?"

"They are of no use to us," he replies. "They were captured by the British. The cost of scrapping and shipping them makes their disposition a problem."

We ask him to describe the arrival of the Germans.

"Rumors of every kind prevailed," he begins. "At first it was decided that Lille was to be considered an open town, not defended. Then there was a change of policy, and efforts for its defense were made. One enemy company came as early as September 25th; a few French troops had skirmishes with them in the Square and there were some casualties. The shelling of the town began spasmodically, and the commander received orders from headquarters that the town must hold out for twenty-four hours. Several times German officers came with flags of truce to demand surrender; this was on November 12th. The Germans, thinking that Lille was held by a large British force, delayed their entry forty-eight hours, which made possible the forming of the British line in Flanders. The next day the town capitulated and the German troops entered. It was dusk and difficult to estimate their number and equipment. I was on the Boulevard and watched them come in. I thought they had about ten cannon; the next morning I was surprised to find hundreds of cannon stacked in the Square and the Square crowded with German troops. About two hundred French soldiers, caught in Lille, were hidden by

A Pathetic Type of Bomb Explosion Victim

The "Little Mother" and her Family

civilians at the risk of their lives and aided in their escape. The *Mairie* and hospital were burned soon after, but the latter must have been accidental as it was full of German wounded at the time."

"Did the Germans damage property at once?" we ask.

"At the beginning of their occupation," he replies, "there was a wave of destruction; then apparently they had a change of policy, and even repaired some of the machinery they had injured. During the third year of the war they began again to systematically destroy or remove property. At first, my factory and its contents were respected, then the enemy began to take things away, beginning with the lumber. In response to my written complaint about taking the property of a neutral, an officer came and verbally repudiated the transaction, saying that there had been a mistake and that nothing else would be taken; but they never committed themselves on paper. I accomplished nothing by remaining on the spot for they continued taking things away, until nothing was left. It was small comfort to know this was 'by mistake.' The buildings were not destroyed."

"Did the Germans take all the machinery in the region of Lille?" we ask.

"In every factory, without a single exception," he answers, "the machinery was either taken, or left with the vital parts damaged beyond repair.

"One of the most noticeable things about the Germans was that they believed any official statement of their authorities. I had the advantage of speaking German, and one day I got into conversation with a German sentry standing guard over civilians working in a field. He was reading a newspaper and, turning to me, said indignantly: 'The French say we force civilians to work against their will. That's not true; this German paper denies it.'

"I looked at him in amazement and asked: 'Well, what are you doing yourself, standing here with your gun over these poor old people?' 'If I did not,' was his naïve answer, 'they would run away.'"

"We have heard that the *Gazette des Ardennes* was published by the Germans. Is this true?" Priscilla asks.

"Yes, it was published by them in French for propaganda purposes, and deliberately falsified news in an attempt to lower the morale of the French civilians. It put in accurate lists of French prisoners in Germany, knowing that the civilians in an effort to identify their missing would

buy the paper, and the Germans hoped that they would gradually form the habit of reading the rest of the news and be influenced by it."

"What sort of news did they try to use in this way?" we ask.

"Well, for instance,—that the English never intended to leave Rouen, Calais and other channel ports, and that after all it was better to have the Germans there than the English who never would be their friends. Curiously enough, they usually published the news of the *communiqués* with but slight variations.

"There was much cruelty in the German régime, deliberate and thorough. They aimed particularly at Lille because it was the metropolis of the north, with a population of 225,000. Often for imaginary offenses, inhabitants of the overcrowded industrial quarters were kept indoors from five o'clock in the afternoon until the next morning. Then there was always the horror of deportation, each family never knowing when its turn would come. I only hope that Americans under similar circumstances would measure up as well as these civilians did, the women as well as the men.

"In the distance I often saw Americans belonging to the Commission, but it was forbidden to speak with them.

"The Bavarian Prince was in Lille a great deal. Whenever the German officers saluted anyone high up, the rumor spread that it was the Kaiser, but I do not think he came often.

"Before you leave, I want to introduce you to a great friend of mine, a negro named Brown. When I told him that the Germans were coming and warned him that he might not have another chance of getting away, he said, 'No, I stay with you, boss.' He was an adept in deceiving the Germans. When they came to the factory they always found a terrified negro, anxious to please but incapable of understanding their wants. One day they explained in pantomime that they had come for the typewriters. He pretended to misunderstand them and began to dance a clog drumming with his fingers—'No, they had no pianos in the factory.' Finally, he got them laughing at his antics and they went away. Incidentally, they never got hold of the typewriters,—the only things we saved. He was most adaptable and versatile. Knowing no language but 'American darky,' he had the faculty of making himself understood in any language and straightening out difficulties between the people in this suburb and the Germans."

Brown comes into the room. He has a simple

manner, and instinctively one likes him. We ask him what he thought of the Germans.

"Personally, they treated me well. I was always laughing at them," he replies. "When the Americans came into the war, I was some worried about one of my boys. The oldest one was in the Regular Army, so he had to fight. American folks were slow in finding out that this was their war, and I was afraid that my other boy would not feel right off quick that his job was to fight Germans. When I heard he volunteered, I felt fine. I never let it worry me when I was lonesome, but to have a boy of mine not fighting would have been bad. He did his part well, too, and got decorated for bravery. I have not seen him since the war, but he is coming over now to work in the foundry with me. I don't know French myself, but I intend to learn my boy to talk it. It's simple. One thing you remember, please, from Brown, and that is never to believe anything a German tells you. The more you know them the worse you like them."

"What a personality," we remark, as he leaves the room.

"Yes," says Mr. R——, "and he is one of our best foundry experts."

Coming out into the hall after us, he calls out:

"By the way, I think you would be interested to hear the dramatic story of Madame Y——. She lives on the main boulevard in Lille."

We call on her at once and in answer to our half apology for coming without a formal introduction, she says:

"I am always glad to tell people what the German occupation was like. I speak German, and was therefore able to cross the frontier disguised as a peasant to carry correspondence into France. All my children were there except my oldest boy who was with me, and it was worth while taking risks to communicate with them. I also managed to get French newspapers into Lille and to help many people in the occupied territory get in touch with their families in France. I devised a system and there were many people connected with it. Letters were hidden in furniture while waiting to be carried by *rapatriés* through Evian in backs of brushes, for instance. It is hard for outsiders to realize what this separation of families by deportation meant,—months lengthening into years, without any news."

"Were there many deportations from this region?" Priscilla asks.

"Twenty thousand. The numbers seem staggering, but the details are even worse," she replies.

"The Germans struck at the family as a necessary unit to France. They deported and kept people long enough to drain them of their vitality and then sent them back to be an economic burden.

"They used Bismarck's doctrine, 'Make war so terrible for civilians that they will implore their army to lay down arms.'

"Four years of enemy control with our every move under supervision and at dictation made many of our people gradually lose initiative. But it is remarkable how the routine of domestic life has been reëstablished.

"At night my boy and I would go out and take down the German posters. It is an interesting collection, quite complete as a recc of their methods. These placards were full of lies, always blaming everything on the British."

She brings out her collection of posters and a series of post-cards showing German troops in Calais, British and French prisoners being marched through Rouen and other important towns of France, and the Kaiser's entry into Paris.

"When my boy was seventeen, I felt he was old enough to fight. I helped him to escape over the frontier; he swam a canal and reached the British line. He fought through the rest of the war and, fortunately, was not even wounded."

She hands us a photograph of a group of women in a German prison camp.

"Why, is this you among the prisoners?" we ask.

"Yes, I was deported," and we can get nothing further from her.

CHAPTER IX

CHILD WELFARE CENTER IN LILLE

Dr. Ducamp comes for us in a motor to take us to his new center. Immediately after the Armistice when we had gone to the Bureau of Hygiene to see him, we were entirely unprepared for the lasting impression his personality and story would make upon us. A rather short man with bushy red beard and tired, faded blue eyes, his voice a hushed whisper, he talked freely of conditions and needs. He showed us charts that silently but eloquently told their gruesome story, the birth rate lowered to the danger level. The deaths from war were indicated in rising black columns, terrible in their heights. Next, in red columns, were shown deaths among civilians from accidents.

"One must fight," he had said, "for the development of the children under twelve if the population of the north is to be saved."

He had given us convincing evidence of need for action. He was no dreamer, but a man with facts.

On our way to the center Dr. Ducamp comments on the convenience of having a motor and street cars running.

"Even after long years of captivity, we have not lost our initiative. Just as our battle line never broke, so now the new battle for overcoming the condition of under-nourishment of our children during their formative years is being won. It is difficult for an outsider, even a sympathetic ally, to realize what it means to have had during four years an organized effort made to undermine the French population of the north, men, women and children."

Dr. Ducamp takes us to visit several grades of schools in crowded quarters of the town. The children who had been sent away for the summer holidays are asked to raise their hands. They have evidently benefited by the change. Their general appearance is as good as could be expected of children living in an industrial city which has had the war history of Lille. The improvement since January, 1919, is tremendous. The child with an abnormally large head and rickets is no longer in evidence.

Before the war, school canteens had existed, the children paying a small sum for their lunch. After the Armistice, the condition of a large per

It is Readily Seen which of these Sisters Lived in the Danger Zone During the War

Medical Examination by Nurses of the Commission for Belgian Relief

cent. of the children was shown by medical examination to be far below normal. Miss Mabel Kittredge of the Commission for Belgian Relief organized canteens for the children suffering from malnutrition. We visit several of these canteens. The lunches consist of a thin soup, bread, meat and a vegetable. Such a nutritious meal furnished regularly cannot fail to raise the general health standard. The cost of this noonday meal is now borne by the "Comité des Régions Liberées," in coöperation with the Commission.

After visiting the schools, the doctor says:

"Now I am going to show you my 'center' which a recent gift has enabled me to equip with consultation rooms for expectant mothers and for babies. On the first of January work will begin. For a long time I have wanted to do this. I dreamed of it when I saw the daily deterioration of our children during the German occupation. Finally, I made a plan on paper showing what I wished to do and what would be the expense. I gave this to a friend. He heard of an American who wished to help France and showed her the plan. *Voilà!* I now have 65,000 francs, 25,000 of which is available for equipment, the rest for operating expenses."

Opening the door, he explains, "This is to be

the waiting room. Benches will be on either side of the wall. There will be plenty of air and light and white paint. It is simple, but adequate."

Leading from this sitting room are two tiny rooms, one a pharmacy, the other the doctor's record room. Between the sitting room and the consulting room are two very small compartments.

"Here the mothers will dress and undress their babies. I shall economize my time by having two of these places, for while one mother is consulting, the other will be undressing her baby. Back of my consulting room is a room for X-ray photographs. This equipment I was able to secure at a low price from an army hospital. In the room next to it the photographs will be studied, —radiography. It is all new. Our organization is not yet complete. I should like to study the system of cards used in Edinburgh, also the photographs. We must get the best ideas to apply to our work."

"But almost all the work in Great Britain is based on French models," Priscilla exclaims, "on Dudin's theory; on the Goutte de Lait; on the Collet Restaurant for expectant and nursing mothers."

"France has the gift of discovery, the genius for new conceptions; but, alas, she sees many of her

ideas developed and utilized elsewhere before she realizes their value for herself," answers the doctor.

Meanwhile, he is showing us his method of keeping records temporarily until forms come from the printer.

"We are using the rooms for evening consultations for working people," he says. "This general clinic is very successful. People come with all sorts of diseases, and as the clinic is not for any specified disease, no one knows why his neighbor is here."

Turning to a zinc-covered table by the window, he explains how they can do their simpler bacteriological tests on the premises. Then reverting to the subject of the children, he continues:

"By watching the children from infancy here at regular intervals, sending nurses into the home to show the mother how to carry out our instructions, to educate her in bettering the physical conditions surrounding the baby, to subsidize her diet from public funds, if necessary, to advise her in regard to her own health,—we should be able to detect disease in its beginning and arrest it before it becomes chronic. The key to success is to lay real foundations. But, unfortunately, this takes time, money and patience. Our work here must be supplemented.

"Delicate children who need country air and extra food must be sent to a special home with nurses and recreational facilities. For the ailing baby we should have a house equipped for a dozen cases. But here the nurses in attendance must be trained in infant feeding. That opens up a big subject,—training schools not only for the nurse who is doing the home visiting, but for special work such as this.

"It is a long story, you see, this program for the children's welfare. Every part knits into some other,—a center like this acting as a clearing station. But to be efficient it must have its discharging depots for treatment of special cases, and it can never function well until the public is convinced of the necessity of it. When the public understands that such work as this is an economy, that by detecting and arresting disease it prevents public charges in hospitals, asylums and sanatoriums, it will be willing to be taxed to meet the expense.

"Patience is needed," continues the doctor, "in forming public opinion."

"It is by work such as this, doctor," we say with enthusiasm as we take our leave, "that a race will henceforth be prepared to maintain and carry forward its civilization."

CHAPTER X

THE EPIC OF LENS

We are told that 3000 workmen are now employed in Lens. In spite of having become accustomed to miracles in "come-back" capacity of destroyed towns and industries of the north this seems incredible and we decide to investigate for ourselves.

Shortly after the Armistice we had looked in. No street was visible except the road from Lille by which we had entered. Shells, some of them unexploded, on crumbling ruins surrounded us. We had climbed a slight elevation toward the top of an arch on a mound of débris, all that remained visible of the former cathedral. Walking was dangerous, due to loose blocks of stone and grenades in abundance. Against the sky were blackened coal wells, and huge boilers and piles of wrecked machinery were lying on rubbish of every description. This place of human emptiness was gruesome.

There was no sound of a living thing, until we

became aware of two Tommies climbing toward us. A gift of tobacco loosened their tongues. They both seemed impressed with the cruelty of the enemy toward children. One of them with simplicity graphically described how he had befriended a little girl not more than four years old whose mother had been taken off.

"It was a shame to see her pretty eyes swollen from crying, and blond curls mixed with straw," he had said.

The other one remarked, after a quiet glance at what was once the important mining town of the north, "It gets on one's nerves, this goin' through village arter village and everythin' in 'em from the church to th' last 'ome, gone. Never seen nuthin' like this, though. Lens is done fer."

As we were leaving the crumbling rubbish to return to our motor, he had said, "Why, w'at's that piece uv wood on top o' the h'arch? Somethin' is written on it. It's French. D'ye know w'at it means?" We crawled up to it and read, "*Lens veut renaître.*"

A year has passed;—what will we find?

We leave Lille by the Seclin-Carvin road. The concrete gun foundations placed in the streets of Seclin by the Germans have been removed. Normal activity is reviving. It is a pleasure to note

Lens at the Time of the Armistice

The Beginning of Life in Lens

freshly ploughed fields ready for February planting, beyond Carvin. On approaching Lens the first vivid impression is again that of a seemingly endless silhouette of ruins against the sky.

As we enter we get the detail of domestic destruction, the first floor of houses seeming to be a continuation of the sidewalk, steps leading down into habitations instead of up.

Two large stone figures, standing on either side of the entrance to a small shack, attract our attention.

"What are they doing here?" we ask a passing woman. She answers: "The Germans brought them here during their occupation and no one knows to what town they belong, so the *maire* left them in a conspicuous place for the purpose of identification. Everyone stops and asks about them just as you have."

There is tremendous activity everywhere. Cellars are being cleared. Many piles of bricks, neatly stacked, have been salvaged from the ruins. Smoke is coming from the direction of the railroad and six tracks are now in use. The destroyed boilers have not yet been removed. A sign "Café au Petit Paris" is on a dugout near them and improvised shops are displaying goods in attractive variety. All types of temporary houses are seen, from wooden huts to those made of *tôle ondulée*

and cement and brick. Over a wooden barrack we see the sign "Union des Femmes de France."

Inside we find thirty young girls sewing; none of them seem to be over eighteen. The French Red Cross nurse in charge explains that this *ouvroir* was opened in August, 1919, to make garments for refugees. These girls are volunteers. Most of them do not look as if they had a great deal themselves in the way of comfort. The nurse takes us to inspect the new hospital that has just been opened. Everything is painted white and the equipment seems adequate. The head nurse, looking approvingly at beds with clean sheets, remarks, "So many people are now ill in cellars or dugouts that I am glad we can bring them here where they will be comfortable."

Returning to the main street, we inquire of a man our way to the *Mairie*. "Is it the office or the *maire* that you wish, because there *he* is now."

We turn to meet the *maire*. He has a wonderful face, but one would know from its expression that he had lived here through the enemy occupation. He speaks of the bravery of his people. "*Ils sont très tenaces ces gens du Nord.*"

We ask him who put up the sign "*Lens veut renaître,*" which is still here.

"The people," he says, "*pour saluer le vieux Tigre* when he came here directly after the Armistice."

Seeing that we are interested in the problems of reconstruction, he offers to show us the plan for the rebuilding of Lens and guides us to the City Architect's barrack. The office of Monsieur Barthelet is a busy one. At the *maire's* request he explains the plans for the future Lens. It will take 200,000,000 francs to reconstruct the city according to this plan. We ask when the building will begin.

"When we find the money," he replies.

"The station is to be three times as large as formerly; fourteen grade crossings will be eliminated. The Route Nationale from Arras to Lille will run underneath the station and then separate into two main arteries through the city, meeting at the other end. The freight trains with coal will come in on a big loop, unload, reload and depart on a different track. Our Hôtel de Ville was completely destroyed. To rebuild it on the same scale would cost 2,000,000 francs."

"Do the plans for the new town include rearrangement of boundary lines of the property of individuals?" we ask.

On the map he traces the outline of former house lots appropriated to widen a street, or to eliminate

a corner, old streets being replaced by new and broader ones connecting with the main arteries in the Bethune, Arras and Lille directions.

"Do the proprietors ever object to the appropriation of their property to improve the city?" we ask.

"There are cases," he replies, "*surtout les femmes qui ne sont pas toujours raisonables.*"

Murmurs of approval come from the *gendarme* and a group of men around the stove.

"A woman came in recently to discuss her property. 'We have been obliged to appropriate your property, Madame, in order to enlarge the approach to the Hôtel de Ville,' I told her. She began to weep. 'I do not care for your Hôtel de Ville, nor your broad highways. I am only interested in my home where I was so happy.' '*C'est pour l'intérêt général,*' I protested. At this she sat down in a chair and was ill."

"Quite ill," adds the *gendarme.*

"She went away," continues the architect, "and we haven't heard from her since. It is sad for the individual, but it cannot be a question of sentiment now. The future of Lens is the only consideration. No one is allowed to build without presenting the plan to this office. The first one presented was that of a cinema theater. It is a

Lens in 1919, Looking like a Western "Boom" Town

"Monsieur le Maire"

model structure on simple lines, with a well planned ventilating system and fire exits.

"I came here in November, 1919, although the bureau was not opened until the following February.

"At that time, there was but one road passable, the Lille-Arras one which had been kept open for army use. It was difficult to avoid being discouraged. Nieuport had been more or less in the same position as Lens, practically on the firing line, but they had something left in the way of houses and roads. Here there was nothing; even the sub-soil had been blown up and the drainage pipes destroyed. The Allies and Germans both did damage to this town. It is impossible to estimate the number of shells that fell on Lens. Why, in one house alone eight unexploded shells were found.

"When the people began to come back there was not a wall standing. They returned to live in *abris* and cellars. By January, 1919, thirty-one had arrived. The first man to set up in business was a blacksmith. His shop was in a cellar, and there were no horses. The people came back from love of home, *poussé par un sentiment d'être chez eux*, even though they had to walk sixteen *kilomètres* to get their food. They endured hardships here rather than remain in comparative comfort in the Midi. 7000

are now back, out of the 32,000 inhabitants before the war. Six hundred of them are still living in cellars. As soon as we get one family out and into a barrack another takes possession. The only way to prevent this is to destroy the cellar. We were fortunate in having barracks available used during the war in Holland and Switzerland for housing refugees."

He points out of his window to the one permanent house in Lens, saying:

"Everything else is temporary. We hope to begin the permanent houses early in the year. The intermediary stage is a necessity and the permanent will gradually take the place of the *maisons provisoires*."

In taking our leave, we ask, "Who is the architect in charge?"

"There is none," he answers. "We are all collaborators, the one in the smallest position may have the best ideas."

We ask the *gendarme* what is the position of the man who has shown us the plan.

"*C'est lui qui est architecte en chef.*"

The *gendarme* takes us to see the *Commissaire*. We find him in his office in the midst of many papers. We ask if the occupation has lowered the morale of the young boys.

"Not in the least," he replies. "On the contrary, war sufferings have made them more manly, more patriotic. Our people of the north have always kept up their courage despite their trials. The only food that came regularly was that of the Commission which arrived in sealed packages and the Germans did not dare touch it. There was much suffering here. My youngest child, born during the war, did not have his mother's milk to nourish him. He is undersized now, not like the others who got their growth before the war. The boys of Lens hate the *boches*. If they had had guns I think they would have done some shooting themselves."

Next we go to the "Bureau de Blément." "Our problem," says the director, "is to clean up the city, to take away the débris; nothing more, nothing less. And it is a big job. It costs 15 francs to move one cubic meter. There is an eight-hour day here. We haven't found much of value in the débris. Many kitchen utensils buried by their owners and not blown to the surface by the bombardment turn up. There is a good deal of discussion now among the women as to whom they belong," he adds, smilingly.

"During the war I lived in regions where there was much suffering. The women were brave, as

brave as the men, but, *tiens* how they do fuss now that there is nothing to bother about!—But that's the way with women," he adds.

"It is a pity it is dark; I would like to take you to our shaft on the La Bassée-Loos Route. We'll be working it by next year."

We go to the Technical Bureau of the "Mines de Lens." In the outer office several men with portfolios are waiting. We begin to have qualms about the enthusiasm of our welcome. The secretary takes our pass and after a few minutes returns with the director. He explains that he is in conference, and making his excuses turns us over to his chief engineer.

We tell him that many of the fathers of the children we had cared for during the war had come from this mining district and that we wish to know what the possibilities are of their getting back their jobs.

He says, "This is one of the most powerful mining companies of France. Before the war our yearly production was 4,000,000 tons. We had 30 shafts and 17,000 workmen. Now about 1500 are back, working at cleaning up. The Germans flooded the mines of Lens, and our first problem is to get the water out. It will be pumped into the canals. There are plenty available for the purpose;

they only need to be enlarged. By the end of 1920 we expect to have the water out. When the galleries are dry, the cleaning and repairing will commence. This will be a slow process. We will need thousands of workmen for it. By 1922 we hope to have the mines producing and to employ about 8000 miners. Within five or six years we expect to be working up to three quarters of before the war production.

"The law passed in February, 1918, stating that factories must give preference to former employees, and the one of May, 1919, that ex-soldiers be given preference, helps us to get the former employees of the regions back. Our employees were contented before the war. We had built and rented to them model houses with garden plots. The company did not plan to make anything by this arrangement, simply to cover the cost of repairs. We also furnished medical service free. During 1920 we expect to build about one thousand huts. Of course it is for the interest of the company to lodge the men's families well.

"The Germans did not exploit the mines during their occupation. It was impossible, since the mines were too near the line of fire. Of course they took possession of the coal already mined."

Before entering Lens we had been depressed at the vast extent of the ruins, but on leaving we are impressed with the order of the new Lens that is to rise out of the ruins.

CHAPTER XI

WAVRIN AND NIEPPE

Mademoiselle de La Grange, "Inspectrice de la Région Libéree" for the Lille District, is to spend the day with us. We call for her at the house of Madame Labbe, wife of the French Food Dictator of the north, who has worked hard among the suffering people of Lille.

Wavrin is our first stop. The contrast certainly is great between Wavrin of Christmas, 1918, and now. At the entrance there is a large house that had been dynamited. Bed-springs, furniture and household utensils were crushed underneath it, giving a curious effect. Bricks in neat piles are ready for rebuilding; constructive activity is seen everywhere. Barracks have sprung up on either side of the main street. Partially destroyed houses have again become habitable. In a little shop window there is a display of vases.

We go to the *Mairie*. The *maire's* face is cheer-

ful and has lost its hunted expression. He remembers our former visit.

"Ah, Mesdames, you have come in happier times!"

While we are talking with him a woman, whom we recognize, enters the *Mairie* on business. She had told us a particularly tragic story a year ago, and was facing her problems with great courage, saying:

"Even so, I shall struggle on because France needs her people in the north."

She recognizes us instantly, comes forward, and with a smile says simply, "*Maintenant, ça va.*"

The *maire* dwells on the difficulties they are experiencing because of the lack of artisans.

"Of course, our own men will come back to pursue their various trades, but, unfortunately, many of them were killed in the war. It is difficult to persuade men not natives to come to any of these destroyed villages to work. But I want to show you something if you have a few minutes to spare."

He takes us into a side street which we remember from the year before, but instead of its former condition of wreck and rubbish there are now neat barracks. Toward the end of the street, in front of a little shop, is a queer variety of

Farm Life in the Midst of Ruins

Model Barracks in Wavrin

things—broken down carriages, and furniture of every kind, mingled with kitchen stoves, farm machines, rubber boots, and other things.

"What is that?" we ask.

"A joiner returned last week and the inhabitants feel that there is nothing damaged that he cannot repair. We have twice told the people not to bring their things and leave them in front of his shop to be mended, but as you see our orders are useless. Look, here comes a woman down the street now with a baby carriage from which two of the wheels are missing. Mademoiselle de La Grange will take you to see some of our *maisons provisoires*. We are rather proud of them. They will last ten years at least. The people put them up themselves."

We go into several. All are immaculately clean and the inhabitants look self-respecting. In one we find a family of seven. They have three rooms and nice-looking beds. A photograph of General Pershing had been placed on the wall beside that of General Foch.

These houses are very satisfactory for living purposes and will serve well until the town is reconstructed. All of them have well-kept back yards. The land is drained by a ditch. There is a duck-board walk in front of the row of houses and a total absence of mud.

As a contrast to this we go to another line of barracks at the back of the town.

"Here," Mademoiselle de La Grange says, "people are living *en misère*."

In the first one we enter we find overcrowded conditions. There is no covering on the beds, and the mother looks ill and as if she needed attention. She has two small, weak-looking children and her old mother lives with her. In her arms she is holding the younger of the children, just a year old.

"In January there will be another," she tells us.

Mademoiselle de La Grange asks, "Would you be willing to go to the hospital here to have your baby if we could manage to have someone care for your children during your absence?"

The woman's face lights up as she replies:

"To be quiet for a little and cared for, I would like that, if I knew my family were not being neglected."

In answer to our questions she tells us that there are twelve other women in this line of barracks alone who are expecting babies during the winter. She is quite sure that they would also like to go to the hospital.

Mademoiselle de La Grange says, "We are ready to install a barrack hospital with six beds for men and six for women.

"I do hope these twelve women won't all have babies at once," she adds, "because it is impossible to get more beds."

Before we left Wavrin she had made arrangements for the housing of a nurse who is to organize the place.

We stop in at the barracks where the "Jardin d'Enfants" is conducting kindergarten classes. It looks primitive but adequate.

Our next stop is Nieppe, which was often under heavy fire. The Curé of Nieppe stands out as a prominent war figure. In 1916 when the road was a thoroughfare for British troops the Curé had already been bombed out of two houses. After the *maire*, school teachers, and other civilian authorities had left, with the help of refugee sisters he organized an *école libre* for the two hundred Belgian and French children of the village. The school was in barracks about a mile from the village. The children went out early in the morning and returned at dusk with the troops. In bad weather English lorries conveyed the children to and from school.

By 1917 the children had to be sent away because of the constant danger. Madame Liouville established a colony for them at Hazebrouck. In April, 1918, when that town was bombarded, they

were sent to the Midi acccompanied by the same sisters. They did not return to their home region until July, 1919. The Curé himself returned to Nieppe eight days after the Armistice. He said, in describing the conditions:

"Nothing was left, *pas une maison, tout était détruit.* Of the eighty farms here before the war, there remained but four that could be reclaimed. There were no cellars not filled with débris."

He tells us a wine merchant made him a present of some wine. "I had no cellar in which to put it, and who ever heard of keeping wine in a *grênier?*"

We find him living in a portable house. He ordered it last December and it was delivered in May. He tells us that the civil affairs are well organized. Out of 3000 inhabitants 2800 have returned and the farms are being reclaimed.

The Curé has busied himself in building a house for the sisters, a school and a temporary church. It is the first church rebuilt in this part of the country. An *ouvroir* has been started to provide work for young girls and mothers who need employment.

"Five hundred workmen from Nieppe who used to work in factories in Armentières are back in other jobs."

He takes us to see the Gruson family. On our way

Gruson Family and the Site of their Former Home, Nieppe

One of Our Families

we meet the father working at removing débris. He was a small farmer and had owned a brick house, which together with all the outbuildings had been entirely destroyed. He accompanies us to his dwelling nearby. The husband, wife and eight children are living in a *demi-lune* barrack near the ruins of his old house. The sleeping quarters are crowded but the house is neat and clean. Mademoiselle de La Grange thinks that by spring the "Région Libéree" can provide an extra barrack and the boys with our Committee return home.

The war has not discouraged nor daunted the Curé. He faces the problems of reconstruction with the same optimistic energy with which he met his war problems. He has fine blue eyes, iron gray hair, unusually clear white skin, ruddy cheeks, and a wonderful smile. He is broad in build and seems physically as well as spiritually strong.

In the interim of taking us about he receives representatives from another American relief organization, transacts business with tradespeople and contractors and listens to parishioners' troubles, yet never seems to neglect his hospitality to us, serving a memorable cup of coffee while we discuss affairs of the day.

"The elections in France were good, but not in Belgium. And whatever *is* the matter with the

Senate of the United States? They need Foch to talk to them."

In speaking about local conditions he says: "We cannot grow quickly for lack of money. The people for a while must be like birds, make a nest where they can. We are glad that now the shop for *pâtisserie* has reopened."

He takes us into the church. At the entrance there is a large pile of wood which a boy is sorting for use. He shows us with pride an old *bénétier*, saved from the original church. The new church is of brick, with columns of wood, and *Sauvez la France* banners on them. The construction does not look solid and one feels that the winter winds may deal harshly with the interior.

After leaving Nieppe we decide late as it is to go to Merville before returning to Lille. We get off our route and do not need the warning of an English sign "Mire Farm" to realize that we are off the paved roads.

The sun is setting as we reach Merville. The tower and outline of the church in ruins stand out jaggedly. It is picturesque and dignified. The rubbish is being cleared away from the church. There is a canal through the town and every evidence that it was a charming place. But there is scarcely a house not damaged. At this hour

farmers are returning, their picks on their shoulders; women are still at work over piles of bricks to be used again. We ask to be directed to the dispensary.

"Shall I take you there?" offers an old man.

"It is easy to lose yourself where everything is in ruins. The streets all look alike. This is your first visit, Mesdames? Our town once had so much character. Before the war we had 7500 people. They are getting back, and 25 per cent of our former workmen are here to rebuild the factories; within a month we expect our canal to be in use again."

Mademoiselle Morel who is in charge of the dispensary is away. We inspect the installation, however, which is an excellent one, consisting of baths, a maternity ward, a children's ward, and an equipment comparing favorably with any we have seen. The young nurse who takes us about says:

"Come back in a month and you will find this place finished and every bed occupied. Where need is so great, one always works quickly to get results."

After all the difficulty we had in reaching Merville by daylight, we begin to dread what our fate may be in returning over these country roads after dark. We say to our chauffeur:

"Try to find a guide. There must be a better route back to Lille."

He looks around and discovers a boy about ten years old, who as soon as he is seated beside the chauffeur, lights a cigarette.

"How old are you?" we ask reprovingly.

"About twelve," he replies.

"You are too young to smoke," we rebuke him.

"Oh, one gets an old man quickly nowadays," he answers. "I am earning my own living. I walk six *kilomètres* every morning to work. I am old enough to do as I please."

He certainly knows the road. He gives us a good deal of information about the country and advises the chauffeur as to the management of his motor, and we are glad when we finally see him disappear into a brightly lighted doorway beside a little canal. His parting words are:

"Even you cannot get lost from here. Keep always to the right. Of course, occasionally you turn toward the left, and sometimes straight ahead. Good night."

When we offer him chocolate in parting, at first he refuses.

"I don't wish to be paid for my services," he says. "After all, in helping you I have got a lift home."

All this region through which we are passing had been rich in soil, in mines and in industries.

"The Germans knew what they were about when they tried to take northern France," Mademoiselle de La Grange remarks.

In a long line of *abris* families are living, glad for the shelters no longer needed by the soldiers. As always on approaching Lille tall chimneys and lighted factories dominate the landscape until one forgets the ruins.

CHAPTER XII

A DAY WITH OUR FAMILIES

Miss Harris loans us her Ford and chauffeur for a day on muddy back roads.

We stop at Henni Lietard, where long-distance bombardment destroyed 700 out of 4000 houses. The building being used by the "Jardin d' Enfants" had been a civil prison during the occupation. There is at present a population of about 11,000 out of the 18,000 belonging here. The old schoolhouse was burned and an American Red Cross barrack on the ground is to be put up in its place. As we approach we hear sounds like chickens in brooder houses. About 50 children come in singing "*Bon jour à vous*," in childish chorus. Small blue chairs, a cupboard with chintz curtains, window boxes with geraniums, and bird nests with blackbirds on the branches painted on the walls, make it so like a kindergarten in America that it is hard to realize one is in a ruined town, and that three weeks ago this room did not exist.

The children we see are all under ten. They seem to love their work.

In Liévin, Mademoiselle Jouhanned is in charge of the kindergarten. The unit has been working since last June. During the warm weather the girls slept in a little hut built for them by British soldiers. At first, they took children of all ages to keep them occupied and away from the danger of playing with hand grenades, and unexploded shells. To keep them quiet they taught even the boys to knit. The wool was given by the Red Cross but no needles were provided. Mothers made needles from wire, pieces of shell and wood, for their children. Each child knitted a scarf, a cap, mittens and a sweater for its own use.

Now, as the French schools are going, the unit takes only the younger children, but on Thursdays the older ones come also.

Mademoiselle Jouhanned says, "You must spare time to call on the old lady of the château. She is quite a character. I came upon her accidentally directly after the Armistice, in poking among the ruins of the château belonging to relatives of the King of the Belgians. We saw smoke coming from the red tower in the center of the court, and examining further we found the old woman. 'Are you Germans?' she asked suspiciously. 'No, French,

your friends,' we told her. Her expression softened. 'If anyone tries to enter my house who might injure me, it is quite simple—I will cut off his head with my hatchet, but you are my friends. Come in,' and she laid down her weapon. This was my meeting with Madame Marie Ireprès. Since then I have seen her often."

The old lady seems pleased with our visit and talks freely without self-consciousness.

"My husband died after 1870. He would have been much distressed to know that I have suffered again through the Germans."

"How do you manage?" we ask.

"The Government gives me a pension. I am contented. I was a little lonely so I took a boarder, a fine young man. He has a real bed and he paid five hundred francs for it. I could not afford a bed like that for myself. I used to have flowers at the entrance of my cellar, but *mes fleurs, mes pauvres fleurs sont mortes.* It is the snow that has done it. *Descendez donc,*" she invites hospitably. "My fire is never out. For three years I was a refugee *partout* and I am glad to be here."

Over the entrance door is a small bronze figure of the Crucifixion, in front of it a faded wreath.

"*Très devouée,*" murmurs Mademoiselle.

As we follow the old lady into her bedroom we

Living "En Misère," Liévin

Our "Lady of the Château," Liévin

see a small Madonna over her bed. In spite of the darkness and dampness the room is clean. The boarder's bed is certainly better than the one the old lady sleeps in, and she shows it off with pride as if the possession of such a bed by her boarder adds dignity to her home.

"Would you like to see the passage under the church that I cleared?"

We can hardly believe that she had the strength to do it alone.

"At first I was afraid the Germans might come upon me that way, from behind, so I stopped up a part of it."

"You seem quite strong. How old are you?" we ask.

"Not so very old," she answers. "I will be seventy-eight next summer. I have always gotten on well because I have never lost my faith in *Le bon Dieu*."

In passing through villages such as these on foot one gets frequent contrasts,—cellar homes and brick ones, barrack buildings and dugouts within a few yards of each other. A sturdy looking man showing some boys how to clean bricks remarks to us:

"You must not think that our people lack courage because they are not all back, 8000 out of

25,000 are home and by next summer everyone will be here."

There are few places which show a greater change since the Armistice days than Armentières. We stop to speak to a peasant in the main street.

"Many thousands of the inhabitants," he tells us, "are already back. They are returning almost daily. We hope that the factories will soon be rebuilt. On the other side of the town you must stop to look at the new chimney just finished. There is a French flag on top of it. It gives one courage to go there."

Building material in quantity has been brought to Armentières; new walls are going up. A big textile factory destroyed at the time of the Armistice is now running.

Our first stop is Ploegsteert. Before the war there were over 1200 families in this town. During the fighting it had become what the British called a "wash-out," not even ruins left.

Some of our children from the village of Ploegsteert, Jeanne, Ernest and Fernande P—— remember German soldiers coming to their house to roast chickens stolen from a farm. Many women were killed during bombardment in this village.

When we visited the place some months after

A Rebuilt Textile Factory in Armentières, Industrial Stronghold of the North, Almost Completely Destroyed

Baling Out Her Flooded Home, Ploegsteert

the Armistice there was practically no one back. Some of the débris had been cleared from a few cellars and two huts were in process of construction. The acting *maire* could give us no information concerning the families of fourteen children that were under the care of our Committee. The town records seemed inadequate.

With this former visit in mind it gives one a feeling of satisfaction to compare it with the present aspect of the place. The *Mairie* and post office are installed in excellent barracks, neatly painted. Others built from the King Albert fund have been put up by individuals who are paying a low rent for them.

The *maire* welcomes us and says:

"Three hundred families are now back and there are constant demands for barracks. They are eager to get their farms in order. Unfortunately, the land is still in bad condition. Four schools are open, with over one hundred children in them."

We visit two of them. There are about 50 boys in one and about the same number of girls in the other. The *maire* asks us to go to a series of reinforced concrete *Postes de Secours* used by the British in 1916, and now occupied by families. There are six of them in line, fifty feet long and about ten feet wide with corrugated iron roofs.

There is no drainage and the service canal on the same level as the dugouts has flooded the three at the end nearest to it.

In the first hut the floor space is entirely taken up by beds for a family of nine. The mother explains:

"This bed over here is used by me and four of the children. We don't exactly sleep, but we get some rest. The baby is tired from many bad nights and is sleeping now."

There are no coverings on the beds nor mattresses, a little straw, that is all, and we slop about in the water that has flooded the floor. The mother looks sad, but it is difficult to extract her story from her.

"For a part of the German occupation we were refugees in Brittany, but most of it we spent in the home region."

She drags forward a silent, scared-looking little boy of five, sickly in appearance.

"He has not been very strong," she says, "since the war. He had nineteen wounds from *obus*, ten of them in his back, two in his leg, and his arm was broken as well. He was cured in a hospital at Poperinghe, but I fear his face will remain disfigured from superficial wounds. He was such a pretty baby."

The woman's mother, an old lady of seventy-two is a pathetic figure as she tells us what happened to her.

"While working in the fields I was wounded by shrapnel. Look at my hand!"

She begins to cry and holds out her right hand to us for inspection. It is curiously and hideously mangled.

"One of my granddaughters was taken off by the Germans when she was only fourteen years old," says the old lady. "She died the next year. Another was killed by an *obus* while searching for milk. These are her children, but they have not been well since they lost their mother.

"It was hard when the enemy was here. At the point of the bayonet we were driven to Le Quesnoy. There they turned us loose. Somehow we managed to find our way to Tourcoing. We lived in misery in an over-crowded barrack until a kind woman found us a home, gave us some furniture and things began to improve. Finally, we were repatriated. That was in January, 1917. We stayed for four months in Belgium where we were separated. Now we are together. The *maire* does what he can and we have enough to eat. We are not badly off."

In the next shelter we find a young woman in

black with an unhealthy looking child clinging to her skirts. She tells us that she had never received news from her husband after he had been taken prisoner early in the war.

"My brother, also," she says, "only seventeen and such a *beau garçon* was taken at the same time. No news of him, either."

We go to the school and our boy Valéry is given permission by the teacher to spend an hour with us and he takes us to see his family. We ask him if he had been happy in the colony.

"Yes," he replies, "but I like to be home."

The farm to which he takes us consists of outbuildings with *demi-lune* barracks for sleeping quarters and there is a good deal of livestock in evidence. We notice a pig, some hens and a cow. Valéry's father speaks to us at length in Flemish. Of course, we do not understand one word and his son-in-law interprets.

"My father-in-law asks me to explain to you that this was once a fine place, but now there is nothing left. The ground is not in as bad condition as on some of the other farms, but unfortunately moles eat much of the grain and *on attend toujours*."

The mother has not lost her vanity in spite of hard days and insists on putting on her best black gown for the family photograph.

House of Valéry's Sister, Neuve Eglise

Interior of Same House

The brother who has acted as interpreter asks if we will stop to visit his family on our way to Neuve Eglise. We do so and find a *demi-lune* barrack, rather unprepossessing from the outside, but the inside is immaculately clean, and the few pieces of furniture and domestic utensils are being used ingeniously.

Valéry's sister is smilingly happy as she shows us her young baby. She has a right to be proud of him as he is a chubby, charming little bit of humanity. She takes him out of the improvised cradle and follows us to the door.

"We are doing very well," she says, "but mother and father find it hard not to be depressed. It is all so different from the time before the war."

Neuve Eglise now is a great contrast to the days immediately after the Armistice, when there was no *maire* nor medical service. We recall the Curé of Ypres' comment on this town.

"Children came into the world and people went out of it without spiritual assistance of any kind until the American Red Cross gave a barrack for a church and we managed to send sisters to organize a school."

We go first to visit the V—— family. During the summer, after the Armistice, we had visited this family and found them living in a hut, con-

structed by the father, of wood and corrugated iron which he had salvaged from the battlefields. One of the boys whom we had sent back in January at the request of his mother had died of pneumonia directly after his return. At that time conditions were too difficult for delicate children in Neuve Eglise.

Joseph, an older boy, takes us to the school where there is great excitement at the arrival of the ladies of the Committee. We ask the teacher if we might speak to our boys. Louis B—— grins with delight as we come into the room, as do also several other boys who had been with us. Those who had been with the Committee are told to raise their hands. A dozen hands go up. The teacher says they may be excused. The other youngsters look sad as our little group leaves the classroom with us. Then we go to the girls' school. Little Rachel, Louis' sister, is especially delighted to see us.

Somehow, by wireless, the rumor has come from the boys' school that if you raised your hand when asked if you belonged to the *Franco-Américain Comité* it meant recess and chocolate, and so the hand of every girl in the room goes up when the question is put by the teacher. It takes some time to separate our girls from the others.

We ask the chauffeur if it would be possible to return by Mt. Kemmel since we have never been there.

"We will try it," he says, "although the road is very bad."

The village of Kemmel has more active reconstruction going on in it, considering the amount to be done, than any other village in the war zone we have visited.

While this once beautiful village was the scene of fighting, children were coming to us from it. Three from one family, Rachel, Maurice and Omer, six, seven and five years old respectively, came to us after they had lost their mother under cruel circumstances. She had fallen ill and the doctors had had her moved to a hospital in Poperinghe. Later when Poperinghe was under bombardment she had been evacuated with other patients and no trace of her was found afterwards.

Gerard V——, twelve years old, at the beginning of the war had described the Germans' arrival as follows:

"We had the first visit of the Germans early in September, 1914. In our village they committed no atrocities. But some of them entered the shops, bought lots of goods and forgot to pay. Others stole all they found on their way, and woe to any

one who dared offer the slightest resistance. I was afraid to lie down that night and I prepared my small bundle to run away, if necessary. The following day we were delivered from these barbarians. They were advancing towards France. My parents decided to go to Dickebusch, but there also there were soon many dangers. That is why I left with the other children and we were conducted to Paris to be with the Committee."

Above the town is Mt. Kemmel, black and tragic in the afternoon light. Death is still in possession, as warning signs everywhere—"Danger." "Do not touch," signify. Mt. Kemmel figured oftener than most of the heights in the *communiqués*. The Germans finally took it from the British and, entrenching themselves strongly on its heights gained a menacing advantage over the Ypres Sector. Beyond Mt. Kemmel is Scherpenberg Hill, which the Germans never captured.

The fields on the road from Mt. Kemmel to Wytschaete Ridge are unsalvaged.

We notice a sign left by the roadside, "All waste helps to prolong war." Coarse vegetation is springing up in places but the whole effect is that of utter desolation and loneliness. One seems conscious of the big human machine of war which has now disappeared, of the courage, the heroism, the

sacrifice of the men who fought here, and also of their fears, their superstitions, their moments of pessimism and longing for home. The Englishman, who loves his comfort more than any other race in the world, showed well here that he could do without it!

CHAPTER XIII

THE YPRES SALIENT

We leave Lille at nine o'clock for Poperinghe; Miss Harris is with us. The Tourcoing and Roubaix chimneys are sending up encouraging wreaths of smoke.

At the frontier, in the town of Menin, the *douanes* are thorough, prying with long poles into loads of hay, lumber and furniture on trucks and wagons, looking for goods contraband between France and Belgium; also searching individuals for French gold forbidden to be exported. The delay is long and tedious.

As we await our turn we think of Christmas day after the Armistice, when we had passed through Menin without formality of papers or examination, there were only a few straggling inhabitants and Tommies. No wagons were on the deserted road marked "Ypres." The Englishman on leave from this front had "jumpy nerves," but he never told to what he was returning. It is easy to under-

"Hell Fire Corner," Menin-Ypres Road, 1918

Same Place One Year Later

stand how in this exposed position, the casualty list averaged one thousand men a week. The sunshine had cruelly given us details in the unsalvaged interwoven network of trenches and shell holes. In the midst of rusty remnants of shells and a forest of wires in tangled coils were crosses above isolated graves.

The *douane's* voice brings us back. "*Rien pour nous?*"

"Nothing," we answer, and we are off, following the sign "Ypres."

Is this the same plain? It does not seem possible as we enter it over a broad highway, in excellent condition, along which a tramway is installed. Men are working in the fields from which crops have been reaped. Grass has grown over shell holes and sheep and goats are grazing among abandoned tanks. The isolated graves have been moved to cemeteries. Only the trees have kept their record of suffering, unchanged, and the horizon view is the same as last year. There is also an occasional reminder of danger in such signs as "Ammunition buried here,"—and yet, only a few yards from such a sign is a foundation for a new house. There are villages of huts, and we pass a steady stream of wagons carrying merchandise to them and to dugouts utilized as dwellings.

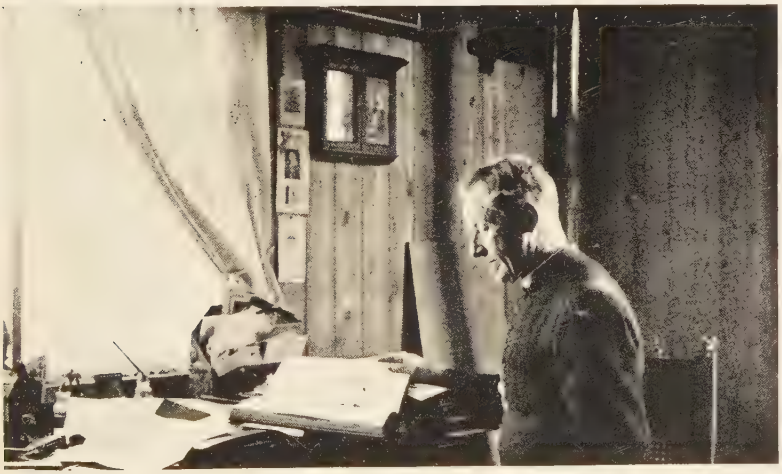
A small squad of Tommies are struggling with American mules; their language is picturesque even if apparently unproductive of results.

"Clapham Junction," "Plumer's Drive," "Sterling Castle" signs still remain. At "Hell Fire Corner" is now a tramway station, with a group of vine-covered huts about it, but a warning sign—"It is still dangerous to dig among the ruins."

Back from the road to the left, beyond "Hell Fire Corner," is the former site of Hooge Château, taken and retaken many times. It was owned by Baron de Vinck and was one of the most beautiful châteaux in southern Belgium. Not a vestige of it nor of the extensive farm buildings remain. The land and woodland is now a waste, fit only for reforestation. Soon after the Armistice the Baron returned and put up a small building in front of the former entrance. His wife and daughter joined him a little later, and they are supervising the reconstruction of their property. In the distance the hut is visible, but we push on to Ypres without stopping to pay our respects.

Ypres as a ruin has lost its charm. The dignified remains of the Cloth Hall and of the cathedral behind it are now inconspicuous in the mushroom city of small gaudy barracks and huts which have sprung up around them. The noisy, obtrusive

Former Site of Hooge Château. Land like this will Need to be Reforested



Doyen of Ypres

steam tram brings tourists over the Menin-Ypres road, connecting with sight-seeing busses for Mt. Kemmel and Messines Ridge. From the Victoria Palace Hotel to the swarm of post-card selling children and the large placards on the busses every note is discordant.

The first shock, from the contrast of dead, deserted Ypres, blown to atoms, is so great that emotion is impossible. As we pause before the maimed façade of the wrecked cathedral we think of the words of one of the children who had come to our Committee from Ypres: "Madame, it was the saddest day of my life when I looked back and saw our cathedral in flames."

The mushroom city is forgotten and again the scenes of 1915 are before our eyes—Marie Alphonse, the Mère Supérieure of the Convent of Sainte Famille of Ypres, living in a cellar with Sisters and fifty children; the British order to evacuate Ypres of civilians; the pathetic protest "The enemy let us stay and you, our friends, send us away!" The answer, seemingly harsh, but necessary: "You must go to the back area." We think of her leading the frightened little group out of the city amid falling bombs and of their stay through the winter months in a farm shed some fifteen *kilomètres* away, enduring hardships from

cold and privations; of her frequent trips over a road under bombardment to the cellar at Ypres for provisions which she carried back in a sack slung over her frail old shoulders. We are glad for the peaceful years that she and her little group spent under the protection of our Committee after their arrival in Paris; and that they were able to return to Belgium last spring.

In searching for the *doyen*, we find children at lunch in a big canteen connected with a barrack school furnished by the American Red Cross. There are 350 children here. All have been refugees, but are now back living with their families who have re-established themselves in temporary quarters. One hundred and twenty of the little ones, still homeless, are cared for in dormitories installed with neat beds, individual basins, towels and even a few tooth-brushes. The Sisters taking care of them are housed in nearby barracks furnished from the King Albert Fund.

After walking over a sea of mud on a duck-board walk, through a village of King Albert huts, we find the church, a temporary wooden structure, and the *doyen's* house behind it. He receives us in a small ante-room, napkin in hand, evidently just from lunch. On learning that we have ours in the car he offers us the hospitality of his room. He

Ruins of Cloth Hall and Cathedral, Ypres

Present Appearance

divides his interest between Miss Harris's police dog and our chicken pâté. We produce hot soup from a thermos bottle, and he asks if we have a stove in the car. When we explain the system and tell him that cold drink placed in the same bottle remains cold, he is frankly incredulous. He speaks French with a strong Flemish accent which is difficult to follow, and seems reluctant to mention his own war experiences. He talks about the work he is now doing for the children and of the difficulty of getting milk.

"There are no cattle here as yet. Even if we had them, there is no fodder, not even enough for a goat; and the transportation for bringing food is still insufficient."

After much questioning he admits that he was among the last to leave Ypres when the civilians were evacuated in the spring of 1915. He has evidently not ceased to regret the refusal of the British to permit him and ten men of his choosing to remain behind for the purpose of saving church treasures. He tells us that he had insisted he understood how to live under heavy bombardment. He seemed to envy Dr. Van Robys who was the last civilian to leave town, but he, himself, had stayed long enough to receive a slight wound and to have his cloak riddled with shrapnel.

He asks if we had stopped to see Baron de Vinck and says:

"He and his family are a fine example. To accomplish results with property in the Ypres salient, back from the main road, is difficult. He is making progress, although slowly. The only way is to be on the spot. Experts say that most of this land about Ypres will have to be reforested, since mixed up in the strata of earth thrown to the surface by the terrific gun-fire to which it was exposed are explosives of all kinds, gas, powder and chemical poisons. After the Armistice, to step off plank roads was dangerous owing to unexploded shells wedged under the edges and high explosive grenades lying about. Serious explosions occurred almost daily for some time, and farm laborers, salvage workers and children were injured in our towns of southern Belgium. Many people were living in insecure ruins, and children would amuse themselves playing in dugouts, rolling abandoned war material through the streets, and picking flowers in the battlefields. In spite of their mothers' warning not to touch shells and hand grenades accidents were frequent, some of them fatal, many maiming children for life. But, pictures explaining the danger, posted in the schoolhouses, have brought good results in educating

children not to look for trouble. We have enough of it, anyway," he adds with a twinkle in his eyes. He speaks with sympathy and eloquence of the price it cost the English to carry out Maréchal Joffre's order: "Ypres must be saved."

"Two hundred thousand British soldiers were killed in this sector. Their gallantry in action never failed," he says.

One could visualize him as an officer leading men into battle, as much at home in first line trenches as in spiritual leadership. He is full of vitality and his immense height lends strength and dignity to his appearance. His face is stern in repose, but it can express both kindliness and humor, as when he tells us of a Town Major who at the time when no soldiers were allowed in Ypres without helmets stopped some regiments just back from the line, badly cut up after heavy fighting with most of their equipment including helmets missing, and reprimanded them for being in Ypres bareheaded.

"Even before I left the shells were coming in from every direction, thousands of them daily, because Ypres was in a pocket. But we are beginning to be a busy metropolis again;—out of 18,000 of our people, 2000 are back. They rent King Albert Fund huts for two per

cent of their value, paying about 300 francs a year."

He tells us that Cardinal Mercier has intrusted to him the spiritual reconstruction of southern Belgium. From the vigorous way in which he is facing this grave problem in some of the villages we have visited, we know he is the right man for the job. We give him the remains of our pâté and in turn he offers us some delicious home-made sweets. He consents to be photographed but is rather self-conscious during the process, making amusing side remarks, and seems decidedly relieved when it is over and we prepare for departure. As we pick up our trench coats, lunch baskets and thermos bottle, his eyes linger on the latter in wondering admiration.

We decide, late as it is, to stop at Reninghelst, and it is dusk when we arrive. We go to the Curé's house and are told that he is in the church. The little town being near Mt. Kemmel has suffered greatly, and the church and graveyard show signs of frequent bombardment. In passing we had noticed a dim light, but had not thought it possible that the ruin was safe for use. As we enter, flickering candle light reveals the figure of the Curé at the altar rail. Kneeling figures, scattered through the church, are singing a chant of

unusual beauty. This suddenly ceases as the elevation of the Host takes place, peculiarly dramatic in this setting. It is so cold that we do not feel we can wait until the mass is over, but hardly do we step into our motor when out comes the hurrying figure of the Curé who insists on our taking coffee with him. Stumbling along in the darkness we follow him to his house.

A beautiful girl with rosy cheeks, heavy braids and unusually large eyes, meets us at the door and takes us into the kitchen. It is immaculately clean and has recently been painted. On the white wall hang steel engravings of cardinals and bishops, which seem strangely out of place among the brass and copper kitchen utensils with their brightly polished surfaces reflecting the red glow from the stove. While the Curé talks to us the girl moves about with quiet grace, preparing the coffee.

"This is the only habitable room left," he explains. "This was my house before the war but it was badly damaged. Most of our families have returned; in fact, the population is larger now than before the war, for many little farms and villages nearby were completely wiped out and their inhabitants have come to us.

"Uneducated people are like children, and not reasonable. When the Armistice came everyone wanted to go home. On application to the Bureau in Paris officials would reply—'Impossible now.' To the question, 'When can I go?'—a shrug of the shoulders was the answer. This made discontent and now it is always *en attendant.* The Government is necessarily slow and our people who have lost everything have no money with which to hire barracks."

Here the girl who has been quietly stirring the coffee suddenly becoming the center of the scene breaks in with:

"My brother was a refugee, with all his family. They had nowhere to go. The Curê has taken them in here. They are upstairs."

She looks at him with a sweet expression of gratitude.

"Their home was at Passchendaele. There is nothing left of it. Even their papers were lost in flight and without them the authorities will not act. *C'est très dure.*"

Her pretty eyes fill with tears, her shoulders heave, and she begins to cry. The Curé looks distressed. She goes on:

"My home was there, also. The mound on the top of the hill? That was the church, now there is

nothing left of it, *rien du tout.* And we all have nothing!"

The Curé seems to have forgotten our presence as he relives the war in a series of pictures. He leans slightly forward in his chair; his gaze and thoughts focussed on scenes far beyond this room, his finger tips touching, gently emphasize his words—a man old at the beginning of the war, but unbroken by his contact with it. Without much education, yet his knowledge of human nature and his sympathy are of great value to his people.

"The Germans came, many of them, asking '*Où est le pretre?*' I thought it was time to go to Poperinghe. I met a patrol in a ditch, on my way out of the town. Some people said they were French, but I knew they were German. One of them spoke to me. 'Will you tell me where I am?' I asked him. 'Do you want to go to the French?' he questioned in a gruff voice. 'No, I want to go to Reninghelst.' When I got away from him I took a back road to Poperinghe and reported the position of a German patrol.

"The French troops came from the Midi; then the English arrived."

"And all *raséd* every day," breaks in the girl, cheered in recalling these pleasant lads to whom

she had ministered home comforts as they came through her kitchen.

"They always asked for hot water, morning and evening, but even so they were *très gentils*—the Canadians, the Australians and the Scotch. They were *très, très gentils.*"

"*Braves garçons,*" interrupts the Curé. "Mont Kemmel is only six *kilomètres* from here, therefore, many passed this door. They came in; they went out; and they were killed. We've had their officers, too. I recall an Australian colonel who stayed with us several days."

The girl is instantly alert on hearing the name. "I happen to remember his regiment," she says, "and some of the men in it."

"He was killed," adds the Curé.

"And his men who were here, they were killed," she puts in, her face saddening.

The Curé continues, "Many have been quartered in this house, both Allies and enemy—the Prince of Hesse, General Plumer often, and even Foch. I see him now, passing through the hall, eyes always down as if in thought. And no wonder! He never looked up and one never got near him. He breakfasted in this kitchen three times. After a 'good morning' he again became absorbed in his thoughts. A great man!

"The time came when we all had to go. When we returned after the Armistice the conditions were dreadful—nothing here, nothing to buy. But still the families came straggling back. And the suffering is not yet ended. War is like a comet—the tail is longer than the star itself."

CHAPTER XIV

THE COURAGE OF CIVILIANS

As we enter Poperinghe the sign "Skindles" is still conspicuous on the one hotel now open on the main street. Before the war this was a restaurant. A British officer, giving up the attempt to learn its unpronounceable Flemish name, christened it "Skindles," and "Skindles" it will remain. Poperinghe was evacuated late in the war, after three hundred of its houses had been destroyed and many families scattered.

During the evening Pierre R——, one of our boys, comes in to see us. His mother keeps a café in the vicinity of Poperinghe where Socialist meetings are supposed to take place. When we try to find out if he has been influenced by them, he replies carelessly:

"There is a good deal of talk going on. One says this and another says that; but I imagine that whatever happens we will all have to work, anyway."

Before leaving Poperinghe the next morning, we go to call on the family of Irene and Yvonne R——, who had come to us from Kemmel in 1915. They are now living in the house of their grandmother. The mother had been struck by shrapnel while being evacuated from the city during a bombardment of Poperinghe. Blood poisoning had resulted and amputation was necessary. We are told she has *deux jambes de bois*, and we feel that our visit will be depressing.

We find Madame R—— cheerful and going about without difficulty. The *deux jambes de bois*, we discover, are both for the same leg, one for every day use and the other for Sundays and holidays.

On reaching the coast we follow the canal to Dunkirk. In the café of a large hotel on the Square are many men of the commercial traveler type. The general appearance of Dunkirk is that of a busy city.

We look up Monsieur V——. An old man volunteers to take us to where he is living and guides us through a dark courtyard and up a back flight of stairs, shouting as he precedes us, "*Monsieur V——, il y a des dames pour vous ici.*" At several landings curious heads look out from doorways to see who these visitors are for Monsieur V——, *au quatrième.*

We surprise him getting into his best clothes in honor of this visit from "*les Dames du Comité.*" He lives in a small dark back room for which he has to pay thirty francs a month, he tells us, and his meals cost him about eight francs a day.

We ask him what he does for a living.

"Before the war I was a baker. Now I have no profession. I just do odd jobs."

He shows us photographs in red plush frames, of himself and family. We would never have recognized him, although the photographs were taken just before the war. The wife is very sweet looking.

"Since her death," he says, "I have never had any luck. I have nothing left now except my trunk, which is empty, and my photographs."

We interrupt him as he starts to tell us with gruesome details about the explosion in which she was killed. He speaks with affection of his little girl and of his three boys, Albert, Gustave and Raymond, who are still with us, but when we ask him about his plans for the future of his children, he says:

"I have none." And we do not feel that we can pursue the subject further.

Our next visit is to Monsieur Turquem, *Maire* of

Dunkirk. We mention having been here in the fall of 1916.

"That was before the trouble began," he says. "It was very quiet then. But during September and October of 1917 we had bombardments on an average of forty-five a day—5000 bombs from the sky, 2000 from the sea and 500 *gros obus*. We were the only city bombarded in such a variety of ways," he says proudly.

He speaks feelingly of the terrible disaster in which the V—— family had suffered, and as a result of which the children had come to us.

"The man V—— is always tired now before starting work, and no wonder he has lost his courage. I went with the relief party to the scene of the disaster. A shell had exploded in the cellar of their house. The wife was buried alive. Her fingers were all missing to the first joint from scratching the earth in attempts to dig her way out. The man was buried up to his neck, and has never recovered his health. He had been a baker. After the accident I got his allowance of flour given to his oldest boy in baked bread to sell. In this way the family was supported. He is now working in a neighboring town and is a *brave garçon*, but the father is done for. Thirty-five people were killed by that same shell. Soon after

this there was an explosion in a village near Dunkirk where sixteen people were burned to death. But despite accidents of this kind, the morale of my people never lessened. The schools were kept going, and I consider that at least four hundred babies had their lives saved by the *goutte de lait* stations."

He shows us one of the posters that had been in use during the bombardments. On it is written:

"Just as it is every soldier's duty to take no undue risk, so it is every citizen's duty to seek shelter from the shells. France needs all of you."

He continues, "It was inconvenient to spend hours daily in a cellar and not always comfortable. When the siren sounded the alarm, everyone descended into the nearest cellar to remain until the shelling was over. Then life went on again until the next siren. It was a strange kind of existence. We were a front line city and it would have given the enemy courage if we had deserted. We civilians wished to hold *jusqu'au bout comme les poilus*. Directly after the Armistice, Dunkirk began to be used as a port by the 'Région Libérée' for the distribution of supplies to the north. But everything went through in bond, and still does," he adds, "which of course makes it of no benefit to us."

We inquire whether the factories have recommenced working.

"They never stopped. Only a few of the unimportant ones were destroyed during bombardments," he answers. "Of course, we have now the same difficulty as elsewhere due to lack of transportation and raw materials, and the factories cannot run full time. Out of 40,000 inhabitants before the war, 25,000 have returned.

"Dunkirk has deserved her *Légion d'Honneur* and *Croix de Guerre*," are his parting words to us.

The presence of thousands of British troops billeted with the inhabitants in the mining villages between Bethune and La Bassée resulted in frequent shelling and bombing and many civilian deaths.

We are familiar with the war problems these miners have faced since we have had children from seventy-five of their families. Most of the fathers were mobilized in the mines, and a number of them were killed in this service. After particularly heavy bombardment the children would be sent away, although the women remained in their homes. The roads in this region, fortunately for us, even between small villages, have solid foundations because of the heavy truck traffic over them.

On the main street of Bethune some French

cavalry officers make a picturesque group in front of a forge where a blacksmith is at work. We stop to ask directions for reaching Avenue de Lens. We pass through a section of the town where there has been much destruction but there are many evidences of building activity. We are looking for the H—— family, No. 91 avenue de Lens. Where their house should have been is a destroyed foundation, so we go to the *Mairie*, a new brick building. The *maire* has the records searched.

"I am sorry," he says, "that I do not know where the H—— family is living. They belong here and were back for a while after the Armistice. Some of our families return for a short time, then disappear again. It is difficult to keep track of them all. Bethune has had a hard time of it, but is making progress. In the Pas de Calais out of 580,000 people, 460,000 were refugees during the fighting. By this November 250,000 have returned, and in the spring they will all be back. We receive many applications now from our families drifting about in the Midi or near Paris for permission to return. Housing facilities are still insufficient. In the Pas de Calais 62,000 people are living in barracks and we need more. In this mining district many of our towns have a larger population now than before the war because

miners from Liévin and Lens are working here. Our coal industry is hard hit. Before the war the output from the coal fields of the Pas de Calais and Lens was 67 per cent of the whole output of France.

"In the mines of Pas de Calais and the Nord which have been inundated but not otherwise damaged, electric pumps and cranes of 400 H.P. have been installed, which are increasing production. In October 1919, 96,000 tons were produced from the mines of Bruay, Nœux-les-Mines, Bethune and other towns. There will be a steady monthly increase from now on. The work of our miners is not showy, but faithful and effective."

It is hard to make a choice of villages to visit, but we finally decide to go to Haillicourt, where we have a number of families.

We stop first at Madame D——'s. Three of her eight children have been with us. She receives us cordially and insists on serving wine. She tells us that she lost fourteen male relatives in the war. When we ask her how to reach the Couron des Evacués, she says:

"I will go with you. It is difficult for strangers to find their way."

It is raining hard. As we plod through the deep mud to reach these Government barracks

for refugees on the outskirts of the town, Priscilla asks:

"How do people who fled to the south and are dependent on railrcads get home?"

"They have to apply to the *maire* of their town," she says, "for permission to return. If there is a place for them, free transportation is furnished. On reporting to the *Mairie,* the family is placed in a Government barrack, if their house is destroyed. When there is a shortage of quarters, the families have to be separated—the men in one set of barracks and the women and children in another."

We are impressed with the scale of construction of these barracks, set in a huge semi-circle. It seems a village in itself.

We hear laughter as we open a door. We find our family seated around a table, five of them on two chairs. There are not enough dishes for all of them to eat at the same time, but they seem to be enjoying their meal and there is an atmosphere of home.

The mother tells us she is happy to have her children back. Her husband was killed in the war and she is allowed something from the Government quarterly to tide over the period until her widow's pension begins.

One of Our Families in the Mining District

Another Miner's Family Facing Hardships Bravely and Cheerfully

Explaining the Government system of *ravitaillement* she says:

"Every family is given a book with tickets in it for necessities, such as salted meat and vegetables. In this way we can buy cheaper from the Government bureau than in the open market. I know, because I have tried both. Coffee, milk and sugar are still rationed. Four hundred grams of sugar, 400 grams of coffee, and one can of milk per month is allowed per person, and 100 kilos of coal a month for each family."

At Hersin in the *Mairie* a young woman offers her services as guide in locating our families. She has a knowledge of the families in her district that tells its own story. She says:

"Our people behaved well during danger, and since the Armistice the miner's lot is not easy. Long hours and hard work, but we hear no complaint. They wish to do their part in reëstablishing the industrial life of the north, and we have had no strikes. There is but little told of the miners' bravery during bombardment because they were not soldiers."

She speaks of the overcrowded conditions in Hersin with 8000 people instead of 5000 who belong here, and barracks hard to obtain.

We visit several of our families living un-

der primitive housing conditions, but looking well.

On these back roads we pass flocks of sheep and other signs of agricultural life. Noeux-les-Mines seems a metropolis in comparison with villages we have been in. There are many brick houses under construction.

In asking an old man how to reach Rue de la Cité, he volunteers the information:

"We are busier now than before the war since we have a population of 17,000 instead of 9000. Even our young people are doing their part." He nods toward a group of girls and boys, their faces covered with soot, coming from their days' work in the mines.

We make a number of visits to miners' families. The impression each time is the same,—a hard life of industry, faced with a sense of responsibility. A number of the boys who have been with us are back home helping in the support of their widowed mothers.

As we return to the main road between Bethune and La Bassée we meet a constant procession of trucks, most of them coal wagons, but occasionally wagons, loaded with sugar beet, drawn by dray horses three abreast.

In the distance are many ruins but among them

Digging up Buried Treasure, La Bassée

La Bassée Market, Typical of the Kind Opened in Destroyed Towns Where Everything from Food to Furniture can be Bought

several factories with smoke coming from their chimneys. Just outside La Bassée there is a large factory under construction. In the ruined town are a few new stone houses and many wooden barracks. We walk down the street, past a destroyed church, toward an open-air market. Fish, vegetables and newspapers are being sold by groups of old women. In front of a concrete observation tower, a woman is selling butter from Holland for sixteen francs a kilo. Beyond the butter woman, shoes, woolens, linen and meats are displayed on the same stand.

At a busy Red Cross "Poste de Secours" we are told that there are 1500 people back, of the 6000 inhabitants belonging in this town.

Just outside La Bassée a mechanical street cleaner, drawn by horses, is sweeping streets surrounded by ruins which makes a strange picture.

We pass a number of women teamsters who look like Canadian lumbermen in their waistcoats of skin.

It is dark when we leave La Bassée. We go over a *pavé* road which is mostly holes. New York traffic during rush hours is as nothing compared to this steady stream of coal trucks which move along with the regularity of *camions* during

the war bringing munitions to the front. These trucks are now rendering just as important service.

A young woman suddenly springs out of the darkness and asks if we can spare a little *essence* as her motor is stalled from lack of it.

"You had better avoid the straight road from La Bassée to Lille," she advises. "Trucks travel that road all night. You will gain time by going through Lens. Thanks for the *essence*." And she disappears into the night.

Our chauffeur looks at the map. Seeing that the alternative route through Lens means doing the extra side of a triangle, he says:

"We will keep on this road."

There is deep mud on both sides, suggestive of unpleasant possibilities, as we are forced to turn out in meeting the straggling carts going back to Bethune empty.

"If the coal trucks would only keep to one side of the road or the other," murmurs our discouraged chauffeur. But there is no system. With some, *à droite*, and others, *à gauche, c'est très difficile pour nous*."

It is blowing a terrific gale and raining hard. Several times we have long waits at railroad crossings held up by freight trains laden with supplies for the north.

It is after ten o'clock when we enter Lille by the Port Bethune. Hungry as we are and tired from the length of time spent on the road between La Bassée and Lille, we feel exhilarated by the effort we have seen in these mining towns towards increased output of coal and by the spirit of the men who drive trucks all night to bring this coal to the industrial centers of the north.

CHAPTER XV

GOVERNMENT AID TO INDUSTRY

PRISCILLA comes into our room early.

"Don't you think it would be a good idea," she says, "for us to get accurate information about the reconstruction of industries? Wherever we go, we see evidences of wholesale destruction of factories and the smoke from the chimneys of new factories speaks of returning industries. I would like to find out exactly how an owner of a factory gets Government assistance in rebuilding. The pass from Colonel Prangey is an introduction to the heads of the sectors of the Industrial Bureau in the devastated area. Let us make a beginning this morning and call at the office of the Lille sector.

"This region is the heart of the textile industry, and after lunching at Roubaix and seeing the Motte factories we can go on to Parenchies where there was one of the largest linen factories of the north. I think we ought to take advantage of this opportunity to get all the information possible.

The French have no publicity spirit; they never speak of their achievements, but surely they cannot object to other people doing it for them."

Priscilla fires us with enthusiasm, and directly after breakfast we go to the Chamber of Commerce and ask for "L'Office de Reconstitution Industrielle." Our official pass evidently impresses the doorman and we are led upstairs and received by the head of the Lille sector. We tell him frankly that we have come to ask questions. He expresses himself as "*tout à notre disposition.*" We begin without preamble.

"After the Armistice we saw a good deal of machinery in the Rhine Valley from Lille and the vicinity. Is it being returned, and if so, how is it done?"

He replies: "The 'Service de Récupération des Secteurs' was organized in January, 1919, at Wiesbaden on the Rhine for this purpose. When the Armistice was declared the Germans had a great many dismantled machines, taken from the region where they belonged and ready for shipment into Germany. It is hard to separate the Belgian from the French, but the two governments have come to an agreement about the division of unidentified machinery. Many of our manufacturers who wish to rebuild their factories and reclaim their machines have no

documents and there are others who have not yet returned to the liberated area to take possession of their property. When the machinery is identified, the owner has the right to refuse to accept it, if it is in bad condition. In such cases it is sold by the bureau. When a manufacturer is able to give accurate information about his property we usually have but little difficulty in tracing it. Although the Germans permitted no cameras in the regions they occupied, many of our manufacturers succeeded in obtaining photographs of their equipment—at the risk of their lives. They did it for the purpose of identification later."

He shows us a photograph of a steel factory taken in this way.

"One of the conditions of the Armistice," he continues, "imposed upon the Germans the obligation to restore the machinery stolen by them. Through our bureau at Wiesbaden, permission is given to manufacturers to go into Germany to identify their property."

"How much has already been recovered?" we ask.

"Up to September, 1919, 100,000 tons, and since then the bureau is shipping back into France about 40,000 tons a month; this does not take into account the replacement of material destroyed

Photograph of Steel Factory Taken by Owner at the Risk of his Life

Cleaning up Is the First Step in the Problem of Reconstruction

either through accident of war or by systematic destruction."

"Can any estimate be made of the value of machinery taken?"

"Yes," he replies, "approximately one milliard."

"Is it true that most of the factories destroyed were in regions where there was no fighting and therefore the destruction was premeditated?"

"It certainly is," he says with emphasis. "This fact should be taken into account more than it is. You all seem interested. I will sum up the situation for you."

"Please do," we urge.

"At the time of the Armistice, Germany through systematic premeditated destruction had made impossible any immediate production in the invaded departments of France, aiming particularly at the textile, metal and mining industries, in which she feared our competition. Most of the smaller industries of the north were also destroyed and the movable equipment taken off. Industrial conditions in all countries were upset by the war, but in France far more than in any other country. In the United States, England and Germany, while they had also during the war exerted every effort toward the making of munitions and equipment, the difference between them and France at the

signing of the Armistice was that they had their factories intact ready to turn to industrial production while many of the French factories were destroyed. During the period when we would be struggling with the problem of reconstruction of our industries, Germany reinforced by stolen machinery would be in a position through immediate production to take from us our clientele. If you are not wearied of statistics, I will quote some figures.

"Before the war almost all of our iron ore and pit coal came from the invaded territory, as did also 76% of the zinc, 63% of the steel, 84% of the copper, 95% of the flax and 81% of the wool. Between 1901 and 1910, 63% of all the new factories built were in the invaded departments and 33% of the industries of France, with a personnel of 800,000, were here. These figures prove beyond a doubt that the prosperity of the whole of France is dependent on the prompt reëstablishment of the industries of the north."

"If we are not imposing upon your time, will you give us an idea of how the Industrial Bureau started?" asks Priscilla.

"It was organized in August, 1917, and attached to the Ministry of Commerce. Until after the Armistice, however, conditions were so unsettled

that only six hundred manufacturers had made application for assistance. By April, 1919, this bureau had become an independent ministry coöperating with the 'Région Libérée'; its organization was simple, practical and adapted to rapid achievement. Colonel Prangey, a man of tremendous energy and ability, is Chief with his office in Paris. In his words: 'to reëstablish industry without money, material or transportation is a tremendous undertaking.'

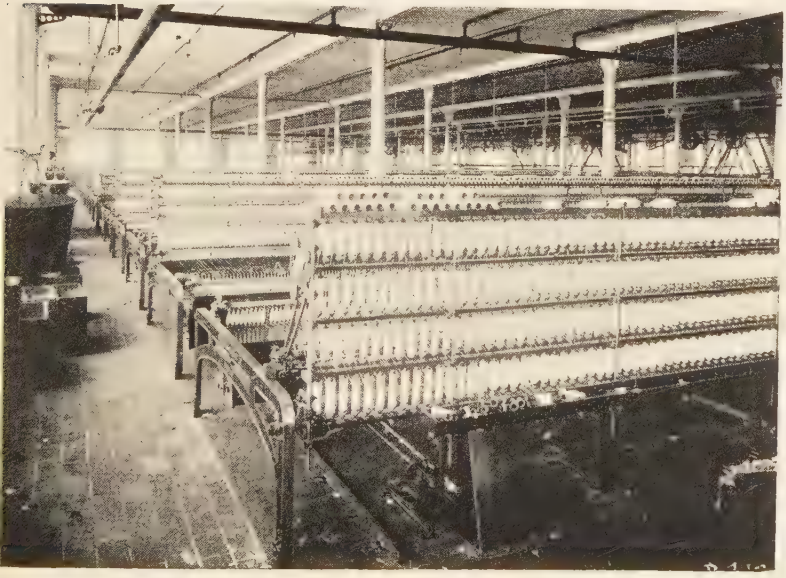
"The Industrial Bureau was organized to deal directly with the manufacturers of the devastated area. It was indispensable that all purchases should be made through a central control, but the government also wished to promote individual initiative, and to do this assistance needed to be decentralized and simplified. Therefore, technical sectors were established in the devastated area. Each sector had a staff composed of engineers and experts in the various industries affected. These offices accept the manufacturer's own valuation for *dommage de guerre.* If upon examination of the claims the staff recommends assistance this decision in turn must be approved by the Cantonal Commission before credit can be advanced. This Commission is composed of local men of standing, such as merchants and members of the chambers of

commerce. In this way the manufacturers' claims come before a group of men from their own districts who know them and who can make their decisions on a basis of proved capacity and character and they also have the interest of the local industrial development at heart.

"The bureau assumes the responsibility of assisting the manufacturer in every phase of reëstablishing his destroyed industry without waiting for an exact valuation of his losses. In other words, it gives the manufacturers an opportunity to start again by putting money at their disposal, and they have to justify the use they make of it. This is the most effective way of helping them and the district. The bureau makes advances for cleaning up, rebuilding and the purchase of raw material. It makes contracts for the replacement of destroyed equipment. It also arranges for the delivery of fuel, and furnishes workmen.

"In order to avoid delay, by a ministerial decree of July, 1919, each sector was given the right to draw checks on local banks for the approved accounts of the manufacturers. The bureau stands in the position of friend and advisor to each manufacturer until his factory is again in operation. These sectors were established practically according to departments, and as soon as the offices were

An Example of the Germans' Use of Dynamite, Acetylene Torch, and Sledge Hammer against the French Industries



Same Factory in 1919

opened the manufacturers came to their local bureaus in great numbers. By June, 1919, 7000 had made application for assistance and the number is increasing steadily month by month."

"How does a manufacturer go to work to establish what you call *dommage de guerre?*" asks Priscilla. "And what happens if a manufacturer does not wish to rebuild?"

"Mademoiselle, these are big questions and rather intricate." He glances at the clock, and as our eyes follow his we see that it is time to start for Roubaix.

"Textile industries are perhaps the most dramatic of all in their come back," he adds. "In Sedan is one of our most interesting experiments for the making of French textile machinery. You should visit it, if possible. Is there anything further that I can do for you?"

We take the hint and leave. Black-coated men with portfolios whom we pass in the hallway have evidently been kept waiting by us.

Between Lille and Roubaix there are no evidences of destruction.

Madame Motte lives in a large house on the main street of Roubaix. We are introduced to her guests, Monsieur Wautine, her son and daughter-in-law. As we sit down at the table and refer to

having met Madame Motte's daughter, Madame Gillet, at Evian, she says:

"You know perhaps of the splendid service she rendered in organizing the system of caring for the *rapatriés* coming back into France through Switzerland? Because of my husband's age and ill health I applied repeatedly to the German authorities for permission for us to go to Lyons, and five times my daughter went to Evian hoping that we would be among the convoys that were arriving from this vicinity. Finally, my husband succeeded in having a message carried to her by one of the *rapatriés* from Roubaix saying that he feared he would never see her again but he wanted her to know how proud we both were that her work for French civilians had been considered of such importance by the Germans that they would not permit her family to leave Roubaix. My husband died here just before the Armistice, and two of our sons and four nephews were killed fighting. But there is no family that has not had its sorrow."

"What were the conditions here and in Tourcoing during the occupation?" we ask.

"Although neither of these towns was destroyed," she replies, "most of the factories were dismantled and the population suffered greatly under the

harsh régime of the Germans. There were many deportations from our region."

We speak of having come to her house immediately after the Armistice when we had found British officers in possession.

"Yes," she says, "the Germans were quartered here during the occupation, and after they left, our Allies, but the latter did no damage to our property, naturally."

On our mentioning the difficulties we had encountered in getting about among the villages in the north because of the general destruction, the son seems interested and says:

"It is hard for those who come here now, when most of the damage has been repaired, to appreciate the problems we faced and conquered. An Armistice on the old Hindenburg Line would have made it comparatively simple to care for the civilian population, but because of the Allied advance the Germans wrecked everything behind them in their retreat, including the water and sewerage systems, taking off with them agricultural implements, livestock, crops and seed. They did this with the deliberate intention of making French civilians feel abandoned by the Government which could not render immediate and adequate assistance. The enemy relied on the weakness of the

civilians in the face of complete devastation, but it was their strength that saved the situation. The enemy had succeeded in putting out of commission 5600 *kilomètres* of railroad track, and bridges, stations, reservoirs and rolling stock were destroyed. The tramways were treated in the same ruthless manner. In addition to this, 1000 *kilomètres* of national highways were made almost impassable, 3000 *kilomètres* of telegraph and telephone wire were wrecked, and our canals could not be used as they were filled with débris and there were no barges."

His wife breaks in with, "My dear, do stop talking about destruction and tell us instead about reconstruction."

"Yes, you are right," he replies, "that after all is the important thing. It certainly is remarkable what we have been able to accomplish with our railroads. All except 500 *kilomètres* of track have been rebuilt. In April, 1919, we had only 80 cars in service with 50 locomotives. Now there are 300 cars, with 230 locomotives. The tonnage handled has been increased from 25,000 tons to 2,000,000 and our program for 1920 is comprehensive. We plan to handle 6,000,000 tons."

"I am afraid we are giving our guests too many figures," our hostess puts in.

Monsieur Wautine, turning towards her, says:

"May I tell a little about the canal situation, which is just as remarkable as the railroad?

"The Germans dynamited all the locks and bridges, but the work of getting the canals back into condition has gone on steadily and successfully. In the Ardennes and the region about Rheims there is still a good deal to be done. The navigation on most of the canals has not only been resumed but increased; almost all the canals along the Oise and the Somme are reopened to traffic, as well as those of the Nord and Pas de Calais. Service has been reëstablished between Marquette and Roubaix which was a tremendous undertaking. But I will earn the displeasure of our hostess if I go too much into detail," he adds laughing.

We are invited by Madame Motte into the salon for coffee. Here we find three charming little granddaughters, looking like English children, dressed in smocks and large ribbon bows in their hair. They are sitting on the floor playing with mechanical toys.

"You see we are no longer dependent on the German market for amusing our little ones. These toys are 'made in France.'"

CHAPTER XVI

THE REVIVAL OF THE TEXTILE INDUSTRY

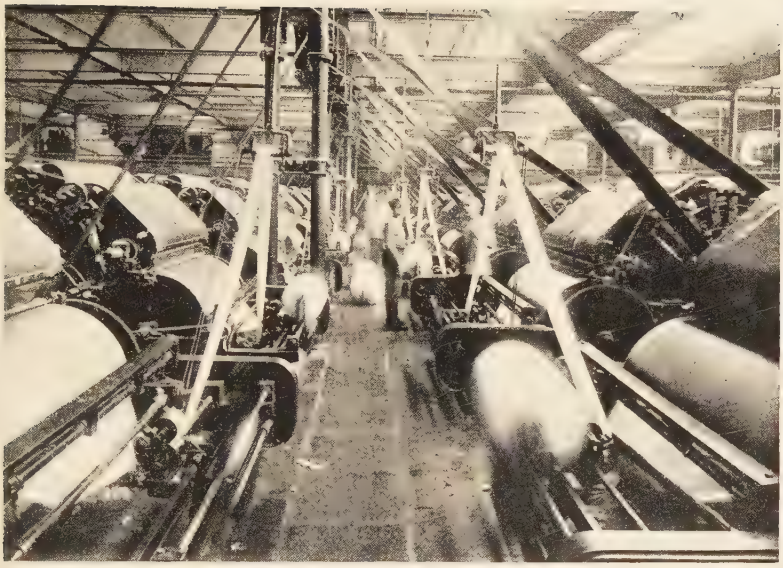
After lunch Madame Motte takes us to the famous weaving and spinning factories started by her husband, and which developed into one of the powerful industrial companies of the north.

The manager who shows us about tells us that all the brass and cables had been taken off by the Germans and most of the machinery damaged. New machines to replace those taken have been ordered from England. The factory is now running half time, with three thousand workmen employed.

As we follow the white wool from Australia through the various processes, we think of the condition in which we had seen these big galleries on our visit after the Armistice, empty and silent. Now life and action have supplanted idleness.

The manager talks to us, and the whirring spindles seem to accentuate his words:

"The Germans made the official statement that



Motte Factory at Roubaix

An Outdoor Sewing Class

they would be able to begin full capacity production in the spinning of wool at least two years before this French industry could get on its feet, and on inspection at the time of the Armistice this seemed likely. Eighty per cent of the textile resources were destroyed in the vicinity of Lille, which was the important center. Out of 75 textile factories visited in this district there were but six which after extensive repairs could be put in operation. In Fourmies alone 650,000 bobbins out of 700,000 were destroyed. In Armentières, which was the great metropolis for linen, with 40 spinning and weaving mills and 8000 looms, everything was destroyed. In the textile industry of our district 71% of the destroyed factories are rebuilt.

"In Roubaix and Tourcoing alone," he continues, "by the end of September 151 textile and metal factories were again in operation, employing 40,000 workmen. The weekly production from these textile factories alone is exceeding 3000 tons a week.

"Without coördination, the efforts toward the reëstablishment of the textile industry, of vital importance to the whole of France, would have failed, but, fortunately, the emergency has produced able leadership. Forty-two per cent of the

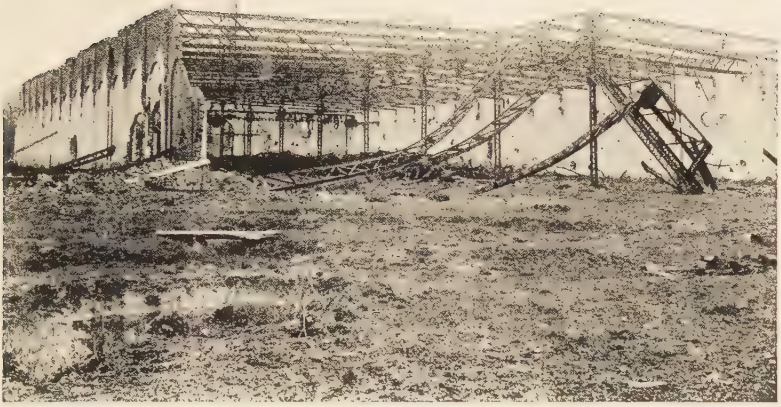
textile factories destroyed are now in operation, with a personnel 33% of that employed in 1914. Almost all the workmen are former employees returned after being demobilized, who have a pride in building up the district."

As we leave the factory and say good-bye to Madame Motte, she remarks:

"You have seen for yourselves that the framework of our shattered industry is repaired and from now on it is only a question of details."

From Roubaix we go to Parenchies. Almost all the inhabitants of this town had been connected with the textile factory of which Monsieur St. Leger is owner. While he devotes his energy to the reconstruction of industry, Madame St. Leger, who was in Lille during most of the occupation, since the Armistice has been devoting herself to the building up of community life in the town of Parenchies. Dispensaries, sewing classes for girls, schools and other activities are being organized by her for the families of returning employees. Although it is late in the afternoon when we arrive, work is going on. A narrow gauge railroad has been installed to remove the débris.

"We have a fine type of workmen," Monsieur St. Leger says, "who are interested in conquering



One of the Destroyed Warehouses in Parenchies

Factory Reconstruction in Parenchies

the problems presented before normal production can be resumed. We use many boys also. With the father missing, boys must begin to help their widowed mothers.

"The first process in reconstruction is that of cleaning up, always a formidable task. Our factories made linen and thread. Since we were only 1800 yards from the British line complete destruction was inevitable. The line remained practically unchanged from October, 1914, until the Armistice. It is estimated that between 6000 and 7000 shells fell within the factory grounds during the four years of war. No wonder there was but little left. The buildings and machinery that escaped shell fire were dynamited by the enemy."

As we start through the factory grounds, we comment on the rapidity with which Parenchies seems to be getting back on its feet.

"The reason we are reëstablishing ourselves so quickly," Monsieur St. Leger says, "is that this factory belongs to a group of six and the first machinery installed has been borrowed from our Calvedos and Lisieux factories. These are here only temporarily and will be returned when they can be replaced. An important company like this gets on its feet much sooner than the smaller industries because it has outside security

and resources to supplement the advances made for *dommage de guerre.*"

As he utters these words, Priscilla says:

"Will you explain to us exactly what that means and how the manufacturer goes to work to get it?"

"Yes, with pleasure," he answers, "but it is a big subject. Let us go through the buildings before it is dark, then later, I will take an imaginary case and give you every detail of the process."

He takes us into a large room where the restoration has been almost completed. There are piles of raw material lying about in bales and skeins and stacked bobbins. All looks very modern and hygienic, with a glass roof, plenty of light and air, and there is a smell of fresh paint. From the porch he points out to us the former site of five large warehouses. The earth is now cleared of their débris, and there is a new warehouse to the right and two others are in process of construction. A new roof is being built on old brick walls.

Hammering is going on and already there are three reconstructed buildings, not counting the warehouses. He takes us into a room where new machinery is installed. We read the names on big carding machines—"Belfast" and "Leeds."

"We are working only half time now because of lack of electricity, but by January we will be doing

a good deal more," he tells us. The roof has been completed in another room where men are busy putting glass in windows. Monsieur St. Leger seems to have an excellent understanding with the workmen and stops often to speak to those we meet.

"Another factor which is making rapid progress possible is the enthusiasm of our workmen," he says. "Before the war out of a population of 4000, 2500 were workmen. Now, there are 1400 inhabitants returned and we have at present 500 employed in the factories."

He points to workmen's houses under construction.

"Take care of their families and you get good results. I do not feel industrial strikes in the north will be serious. We have some foreign labor and will have to employ more. But the workman is often a land owner and that gives him a sense of responsibility and a desire for stability of government. At the time of the Armistice there were a number of men unemployed who were available for factories, but there was a great lack of men with technical experience. One of the most useful services of the bureau for the reconstruction of industry has been the placing of workmen. They came to an agreement with the military authorities for their prompt demobilization. The soldiers who belonged to the

factories of the north often returned to a destroyed industry, and enforced idleness would have been bad for them. The bureau has placed up to date 235,000 workmen. Prisoners have been used, but mostly for cleaning up, and never in any way that might interfere with French labor; and foreign labor is never given precedence over French.

"Before the war, we produced only half of our needs of textile materials. We were dependent on outside sources for raw materials, and a good deal of the coke used by our industries was imported from Germany. With the present scarcity of raw materials in the market, and until the terms of the Peace Treaty are enforced, our situation will be difficult."

We go down an outside staircase into a forge where girls are cleaning bricks. Near them is a primitive heating apparatus,—a piece of sheet iron with holes punctured in the lower part in which refuse is used for fuel. We are taken through a yard where amidst iron débris of all kinds are huge ruined boilers. Then returning to the building we go into a room, not yet repaired, where the remains of dynamited machines are still in evidence. In the center is a huge *compon* wheel of 500 HP that has escaped destruction. Stripped of its cables it stands among the ruins as if symbolic

"Compon" Wheel

Repairing Workmen's Homes

of that prosperous industrial life of northern France which the Germans so wilfully set out to crush. As we look at it, we hear Monsieur St. Leger say:

"To quote Dr. Streseman, before the Tribunal of the Reichstadt: 'The damage done in textile factories represents a loss of many millions of francs to France. We must congratulate German industry in ridding itself of so formidable a competitor.'

"However, due to the energy and determination of our people in the north of France, Germany has failed to annihilate us economically. Now for the promised dissertation on *dommage de guerre.*

"Before taking an imaginary claim for *dommage de guerre* let me tell you something about the law concerning it. One of the clauses provides that every manufacturer or proprietor of agricultural property who does not intend to rebuild his industry will receive from the Government an indemnity calculated on the value of the property in 1914. This payment will be made by means of a non-transferable bond bearing five per cent interest. At the end of five years the Government will begin payment to redeem the bond, paying at the rate of one tenth of its value yearly. Therefore, the manufacturer or the proprietor who is not rebuilding his industry is only repaid for his loss at the end of fifteen years."

Priscilla exclaims: "But the long delay in payment of the indemnity due a manufacturer seems unfair."

"Yes, it does seem so," replies Monsieur St. Leger, "but the reason is obvious. The Government must give precedence to the claims of those who by rebuilding factories help not only themselves but the entire industrial situation. Here is the important point of the law: Every manufacturer or owner of agricultural property who declares his intention of rebuilding will receive from the Government a sum covering the cost of material and equipment at the time of rebuilding. On the other hand, if the manufacturer does not rebuild, he has the option of assigning his right to war indemnity to a third person or company who agrees to rebuild the industry. This transfer must have the authorization of the civil tribunal of the town and the new factory must be within a radius of fifty *kilomètres* from the original site. Now, for a case to illustrate how the law works.

"Let us take that of a cotton manufacturer whose war indemnity, estimated at its 1914 valuation, is 1,000,000 francs. If he sells his right he is entitled to 1914 valuation, that is, 1,000,000 francs plus 25% which represents 5% interest for the five years of the war. In addition

to this 25%, he usually gets from 10% to 20% more, depending upon individual circumstances. Let's say, in the case of our manufacturer, he got 15% additional. This would make a sum of 1,400,000 francs for the sale of his rights."

"Suppose he wishes to rebuild instead of selling his rights, how would the indemnity be calculated?" we ask.

"This table explains." He writes out the following for us:

1914 Valuation	francs
500 looms at 600 francs each	300,000
Factory building	200,000
Machines and accessories	200,000
Steam engine, boilers, pumps, &c.	60,000
Raw materials	240,000
Total	1,000,000

Present Valuation	francs
500 looms at 3000 francs each	1,500,000
Building	900,000
Machines and accessories	1,000,000
Steam engine, boilers, pumps, &c	300,000
Raw materials	1,300,000
Total	5,000,000

"You see 5,000,000 francs would be the cost of replacing this factory with its equipment, just five times as much as in 1914.

"Now the man who purchases the right to this war indemnity of 1,000,000 francs and pays for it 1,400,000 francs really gets, as the table shows, a credit from the Government of 3,600,000 francs."

"What does this figure represent?" Priscilla asks.

"The difference between the present valuation of 5,000,000 francs and the purchase price of the indemnity rights, 1,400,000 francs. But to make this credit final it must have the Technical Sector's approval of the manufacturer's estimate of his property. When this is given the manufacturer receives an advance up to 75% which is 3,750,000 francs. The remaining 25% is paid only after the Cantonal Commission has endorsed the estimate.

"Does he get the 75% in one payment?" we ask.

"No. He can get one half of the amount, or 1,875,000 francs as soon as the chief of the sector has approved his estimate. If he used this sum during the month and can produce receipts for expenditures, the next month he can ask for 50% of the remaining credit. And this happens each month until he uses up his provisional credit and after the

Cantonal Commission's endorsement is received the remaining 25% is paid. This order can be discounted by a bank. Therefore, the capitalist who has bought a war indemnity for 1,400,000 francs has as a guarantee for his capital a factory and raw materials of a value of 5,000,000 francs."

"Are there many of these rights for sale?" we ask.

"Yes," he answers, "a good many. A number of our manufacturers of the invaded districts were killed, others have suffered so much that they have no longer the strength and energy to begin their industrial life all over again."

"Have many Americans bought these rights?" asks Priscilla.

"Not as yet," he replies. "But there are many English companies and individuals who have been purchasers."

CHAPTER XVII

LILLE TO ARRAS

SEVERAL times we postponed our departure because each day brought valuable and interesting experiences. On our return trip to Paris, we decide to spend the first night in Arras, which will give us plenty of time to study conditions in the villages on back roads between Lille and Arras. Immediately after the Armistice we had gone through Loos, Souchy, Vimy, and other places where there had been constant fighting. Then the only movement visible was in tottering walls, seeming about to fall on us. The fields were but desert waste, filled with broken war equipment. In some villages distorted masses of steel and iron, once factories, were conspicuous landmarks where everything else had been obliterated. In other villages the steel, metal, tool and textile factories were dismantled of their machinery, and the foundations so badly damaged that the buildings could not be used again. A

few families were living in reinforced concrete dugouts.

Just outside of Lomme we are stopped at the railroad crossing by a long freight train, carrying a load of demountable barracks used by the army during the war and which are now available for refugee housing. A man on a heavy truck talks to us while the train goes by.

"I am from the north," he volunteers. "I never grudge the time lost in being held up by a load like this. There are so many people who need houses. You are strangers and probably do not know much about the region. Here in the north there were 93,000 buildings needing repairs. Now, one year later, we are working on 22,000, of which 13,000 have already been finished. A scarcity of building material and workmen makes this difficult and expensive, but a home is what every family wants, so you find more work than grumbling. I see the train has passed. Look at some of the shelters along this road; they are interesting. *Bonjour.*"

Going through Lomme we find the textile factory which was in such an apparently hopeless condition at the time of our last visit, now in operation; and in Sequedin the wrecked electricity plant has been repaired.

We are disappointed not to find in Comines the woman who during the occupation had acted as *maire*. She had had a difficult problem in her town as 18,000 Germans were quartered on 2000 inhabitants. When we had been there after the Armistice her people spoke with much affection and enthusiasm of their "Mademoiselle." With unabated courage she was still at work, giving them much needed assistance.

On the right, as we enter Loos, is a huge coal well completely destroyed except for a wheel in the center. We pass some sturdy and cheerful-looking men and women coming out of dreary cellar homes and admire the courage which despite hardships has kept them from deserting their region.

Along the road beyond Loos, the trees have been cut and there are neither barracks nor signs of buildings rising above the ruins. But a pump with a straw-covered jacket is evidence that somewhere in the midst of these desolate wastes human beings live.

Further along, munition wagons are being used for carrying building material and occasional shacks show that we are approaching what must have been the center of a town. We pass a hut erected among ruins where an enterprising citizen has put up a sign—"Choice rooms for travelers."

Cellar Homes in Loos

"Rooms for Travelers"

Men are working on a bridge over a canal, and a barge named *Avenir* approaches filled with hay.

We come to Souchy across a long stretch of fought-over ground. There is still, apparently, the menace of exploding shells as signs warn civilians to be careful. Because of many new buildings, the wrecked sugar factory is no longer conspicuous. In the fields near a Vimy Ridge cemetery, men are digging up isolated graves for reburial. The *pavé* road between Souchy and Thelus shows that this was once an active district and we pass frequent indications of farm life with all kinds of material ingeniously used in building. We are attracted by some boys working in a garden in front of a shack. A smaller boy is playing with a goat, and near the house a woman is washing clothes. In the vicinity are a few destroyed stone houses with bits of red tile roofing, covered with moss and vines

Priscilla remarks, "I wonder if the picturesque stone houses with red tile roofs will ever come back. These wooden and brick temporary houses are not satisfying to the eye." Then, looking at the woman, she adds sympathetically, "I suppose you once had a pretty house here. It's a pity it is gone."

"Well, I am glad enough for this shelter we have

in its place," the woman answers cheerfully. "My boys got the timber from the trenches and neighbors helped us build. It is a good house and it does not leak."

When we reach the crest of the hill approaching Vimy we get out of the car to see the monument in honor of the Canadians who took Vimy Ridge when the enemy held every height in its vicinity. At the time of the Armistice, none of the inhabitants had returned. Among ruined houses was a wrecked oil plant and a destroyed brewery. Now, in their vicinity are barrack-warehouses, and many stone and *demi-lune* houses are under construction. The foundations of these *demi-lune* houses are of cement or brick. The semi-circular roof is covered with corrugated iron which comes in sections. During the war this *tôle ondulée* was used in great quantities by the army for trench and dugout protection. Now, the salvaged material is proving useful in rebuilding.

A nurse in charge of a Red Cross dispensary asks us if we had been in Vimy before.

"Directly after the Armistice," we reply.

"Then there is no need for me to tell you what progress has been made. You can see for yourselves. Vimy is now a live town with 2000 of its 2500 people back. Of course, there are still sec-

House Built from Trench Material

"Demi-lune" House under Construction, Vimy

tions in the north where the land is not reclaimed, but this is the exception. Many of the peasants ploughed by lantern light far into the night, and almost all of the fields will be ready for spring planting."

She tells us an amusing story of an American girl, an ambulance driver, who was ordered to help evacuate a village in this vicinity. The peasants refused to leave without their livestock, and this girl was made responsible for eight cows which belonged to her party. They traveled all night through the darkness and frequently she rounded up her cows straying in the fields. In the morning on reaching Arras, to her horror she discovered that she had thirteen cows instead of eight.

Arras is now an active center. American machinery has been installed in a stocking factory which is now in operation. We go to the "Hôtel l'Univers." While we are eating dinner, the *maître d'hôtel* joins us and says:

"The roof leaks and the walls are all askew; only a small part of the hotel is habitable. I remained here during most of the war, excepting when the bombardment was especially heavy. The British soldiers during my absence gradually burned all the furniture. Do not think I blame

them, they were cold. *C'était la guerre. Reconstruire? Certainment.*"

We ask him about the business situation in Arras. He replies: "It is still difficult. The small merchants hesitate to take the necessary risks, and one can hardly blame them. They sell their merchandise at fantastic prices because they do not know what they will have to pay for new stock. This makes it difficult for those of limited means. Arras has a plan ready for the new town that is to grow out of our ruins. The main street is to be widened and there will be many other improvements."

We mention having seen the plan for the new Lens.

"Ours is equally good," he says firmly.

"We have noticed that your big metal factory is not yet restored," we say.

"No, neither the metal factory nor the oil works, but 56 per cent of the factories in the Pas de Calais are now running as against 48 per cent in August. We are making progress.

"The group of men at the next table are our town officials, including the *maire*. They can tell you of our plans for the future," he says as he goes off to attend to other guests.

After dinner, in the salon we meet the *maire*

and the officials and get into conversation with them.

"What is the Government method of procedure in rebuilding towns?" we ask.

"Rebuilding cannot be a Government affair, neither must it be left to the individual," the *maire* replies. "It is not a question of rebuilding a town as it was, but to rebuild it according to the plan which will insure its future. The Government wisely leaves this to each municipality, but the plan must be submitted to the Ministry of the Interior for suggestions and endorsement. One of our most helpful organizations, 'La Renaissance des Cités,' gives gratuitous advice to the municipalities. Among its members are experts in engineering and architecture. After a study of local conditions they submit plans to the municipality. The planning of a community, whether it is a town or a city, is a science of which there is as yet but little known. Our French towns have been the growth of centuries. In some of them the narrow crowded streets are unfitted to modern life, to the heavy traffic of automobiles and the railroad systems now needed."

"We have coöperative societies in 1200 of the towns that are to be rebuilt," adds one of the town officials. "This has the advantage of uniting

people with a common interest and purpose. Take a town of 6000 inhabitants, for instance. If they are joined in a coöperative society, the Government will deal with a single body instead of with 6000 individuals, and the work of rebuilding or of repairing damaged buildings can be undertaken on a big scale, and far more cheaply than if contracts were made by each individual interested."

The *maire* nods his approval and says, "The best experts available are at the disposal of the communities to insure for the cities beauty, convenience and possibilities of growth. In other words, while making the city answer the demands of modern life, it will safeguard its historical buildings. Many of our cities of the north, being industrial centers, face the problem of where to locate the new factories allowing for their growth, and this means also workmen's quarters generously planned. Then there is the problem of transportation. Many of our old freight stations were inadequate. Rheims is an example of this. Now we have an opportunity for planning an adequate system of yards and depots and of developing our canal possibilities. We must do the work thoroughly, but never at the expense of the beauty of the town. The great coal regions of the north need a new system. Nothing could be more valu-

able to France than the carrying out of the plan for the new Lens.

"With the present cost and shortage of material, especially iron and steel needed in construction, and the lack of labor, it is hard not to be discouraged when one has the vision of what type of town can grow out of destruction. None of us has lost faith in the future nor enthusiasm for our work, but there are many practical difficulties. Our new cities must be planned in such a way that instead of the people adapting themselves to the city, the city is adapted to the life of the people. We are faced on the one hand with the problem of urgency of the moment, and on the other with what is best for the future of the community.

"If you were in the north immediately after the Armistice, you know from what you have seen how much has already been accomplished, and you, too, will have faith that our dreams for future cities can be realized."

CHAPTER XVIII

THE ARRAS-CAMBRAI ROAD

On entering the Arras-Cambrai road, we come to trenches, wire entanglements and unexploded ammunition dumps. Where so much is needed to reclaim the land for early spring planting, one regrets to see wrecked farm machinery lying about. The only signs of life are flocks of crows and a few straggling workmen on the far horizon. The trees which line the roadside are gray, stripped even of their bark; white subsoil shows where the trenches were blown up. The sky takes its sombre hue from the landscape below it. A new service of telephone poles has been installed near the dead trees. A little farther along we pass a salvage camp where there are neat stacks of iron ready for transportation, broken down *camions* and remnants of tanks. Beyond is a milestone full of bullet holes. Near deserted huts is a grave, and a helmet above the cross gives a slight note of color. On the other side of the road is a football field with

white line markings. The sign "British Camp" is not needed.

We pass a little village. In it are a few new shacks which emphasize the ruins huddled together. Behind them are pools of stagnant water in the fields, due to absence of surface green to absorb the moisture. There are German guns, masses of iron material, boilers and trucks, and a sign "St. Rohart." Looking in every direction, one sees nothing to suggest where the village had been. This refuse of iron, what was it? As if in answer to the question, a man on a cart stops.

"You are of the country?" we ask. "What was this?" pointing to the ruins.

"What was it? A sugar factory. I used to work in it. Here are the boilers. There, the big trough in which the sugar was made."

He points to the iron gates lying on the ground.

"That was the entrance. The gates are not needed now. There is nothing to protect."

We follow him into the ruins and look at the large cables.

"In spite of their thickness the *mitrailleuse* pierced them as if they were paper. These empty 105's were a powerful enemy against our factory. This is German wire. It is well made. They are thorough in all things, but their special genius is

for destruction. France has worked hard and constructed. Germany has worked hard to learn how to destroy the industries of France. What has been here a united whole, the action of each part helping the action of the whole, is now an *amas de fer*, but it does not mean that we are finished. Look at that small wheel in front of the long line of bricks. It formerly was a wheel in the factory. If you will come back, Mesdames, you will see that wheel turning again. These fields, now growing crops of iron, will produce good beet root, and my *métier* will be given back to me."

"*En attendant*," we ask him, "what are you doing?"

"Not much. *La vie est très dure.*"

As he gets up on his cart and drives on we shout after him "*Bonne chance.*"

We enter the main street of a ruined village, Vis-en-Artois, and on a broken-down wall at its entrance is a new sign—"Rue de la Victoire." Courage and faith have placed it here. Near some unsalvaged dugouts off the main street we see two women collecting wood out of the débris of houses. Close by a cow is grazing beside a pile of exploded shells. One of the women has a bandage around her head.

"I fell yesterday," she explains.

"May we take your photograph?" we ask.

"Why? I am no longer pretty."

She insists upon removing her bandage. The other woman, wan in appearance, with narrow shoulders, straightens out a few wisps of hair. A third one appears down the street. They call out to her, "Madame Chopin, come and join us for a photograph."

Madame Chopin calls back, "I am not well dressed."

"Neither are we," is the answer.

We marvel at the spirit of these women who laugh and talk while the picture is being taken.

In the next village, Haucourt, there are new wooden shutters on brick houses with only the lower story left, *tôle ondulée* shutting out the weather. Just beyond, we find a man ploughing. He has a fine, sensitive face, strong and alert. We stop to photograph him.

"*Ne bougez pas*," we warn the horses. The man seems friendly and unwilling to have us leave his part of the country.

"Surely, you will walk into the fields only a short distance," he urges, "to see the huge subterranean underground *abris*, very ancient, cut out from the chalk cliffs by the Gauls. The Germans stumbled upon them accidentally."

We cannot resist, and follow him over ground where walking is difficult. He warns us constantly to be careful of our footing. Ugly looking shells, both British and *boche*, are sticking their noses up from the soil. Behind a pile of unsalvaged wire white pebbles spell out the name "Fritz Huneck," and a little farther on, through the uneven fields, we read on a blackened cross in letters faintly legible, "Lieut. Harry ——"

The ploughman pauses a moment.

"I have often wondered who he was. Many a brave English lad died here."

Suddenly, with a sweep of his long arm, he points back toward the horizon across the road.

"See that hill on the left? It used to be a farm, Servin by name. It took the Canadians four days to capture it. That was in March, 1918. *On a perdu beaucoup de monde ici.*"

"The English were on the heights," he continues, "over there as far as Albert, 25 *kilomètres* from here, the Hindenburg Line between us and them. These fields extended as far as Albert. This was a region of beet root and the farmers were prosperous. It is difficult to believe, is it not, when one sees the subsoil and only occasionally a small patch that shows the former richness of the

land? It will be hard to reclaim these fields, but that does not mean—impossible."

We finally reach the entrance of the *abris*. Steps lead down an incline so steep that one seems almost to be walking on one's head. The roof and sides are covered with mold and a white fungus growth which looks like absorbent cotton. It is very dark after getting down about fifty steps, forty yards or so below the surface. Peering ahead, by the light of our flashlight, we can see that the straight passage is blocked by boulders.

The man seems surprised and remarks:

"Why, people come here all the time for wood. We can get through to the left, however."

We look at one of the boulders which seems ready to fall. The air is hot and very bad. Our chauffeur who has accompanied us with no enthusiasm for the trip keeps murmuring:

"*Les abris sont tous pareils ce ne vaut pas la peine de descendre plus bas.*"

We stand irresolute as our feet, slipping in the foul mud, are caught in the long lines of loose wire at the side. Our guide, encouraging us, says:

"*C'est plus beau en bas.* At least come into this first room."

The Germans had installed electricity but the room is now dark and damp. There are four or

five tiers of bunks on one side and broken-down chairs and other domestic remnants not worth moving except for firewood. We are glad to get back into daylight.

In a long low ditch we find war relics of every description, sabers, knapsacks, canteens and other things mixed with the bones of the dead. Our guide from the first has interested us with his definite personality. Curiosity in the subterranean quarters of the *boches* being satisfied, we devote ourselves to learning his history. Our rubbers slip off constantly in the deep mud, and with never failing patience he extricates them and puts them back on.

"Your wife?" we ask him.

"She is dead. She died during the occupation of this region as a result of hardships. I have two boys, one fifteen and the other ten, and *ma vieille mère, heureusement.* No, I do not think of marrying again. I reason this way—a good grandmother is far better for my boys than possibly a bad stepmother."

We return to the motor. He points to the fields on the other side of the road where the ground has been leveled and in which we had found him ploughing. On the outskirts is a group of shacks. Smoke is coming from one of them.

Wood from the Ruins Is the only Fuel in Many Towns, Vis-en-Artois

"La Vieille Mère"

"That is mine," he says. "*La mère* is preparing my midday meal."

We hesitate. Would we miss something in not making the acquaintance of *la vieille mère?*

"I would like a German gun," Priscilla suggests.

"I have one and will get it for you with pleasure if you will wait."

The chauffeur looks discouraged. Suddenly, reckless of time, we say, "No, we will come with you."

As we walk through the fields he says, "One must take care in ploughing, especially when the light gets dim in the late afternoon. The holes in the earth lead to unexploded shells beneath. Everything is difficult. Last May a munition dump exploded from the heat—more people killed! Yesterday, in ploughing, we found a *boche* unburied. That is why there are so many crows about. *Faites attention, il faut toujours faire attention aux pieds dans ces champs.* By summer everyone will be back home; the Government is putting up barracks to welcome them. Sixty Belgians are coming to salvage the fields. They work better than German prisoners.

"It costs 15 francs a day to feed horses here. Mine will stand while I am away; they are *mal nouris* and have no energy. That is my *écurie*,"

he points to a little shack covered with green cloth. "Behind it is the house of *la vieille mère* who has always a welcome for me and my friends."

The old lady has a quiet charm and dignity, and is a gracious hostess.

"We have not much here," she says, turning to us with a smile, "*mais c'est propre*, and look at the *fauteuil*, it is covered with real Aubusson tapestry. We found it in the German subterranean passage where we got all our furniture. Would you like to see my bedroom?"

In it is a bed ingeniously put together from wooden planks. On shelves made from bits of an old *armoire* clothing and linen are placed in neat piles.

When she offers us coffee we are sure it will be good coffee. A small puppy and a kitten are playing about.

"It is hard to spare enough food to keep them as they are." (Both look unusually fat.)

The outside of the house is *tôle ondulée* and tarred paper; inside—whitewashed brick. There are two windows with paper instead of glass, and a tall clock is ticking cheerfully.

"We came back, and for two months lived in a cellar without light or fire—*on aime son pays*," she says simply. "But it was bad for the boys."

Then, looking at us with interest, "*Anglaises Mesdames?*"

"*Non, Américaines.*"

"*A la bonheur,*" she exclaims. "We have had *les soldats Canadiens;* they were *Américains*, also."

"*Non, Anglais,*" we correct her.

The old lady contests the point. "But they said when we asked them '*Non, nous ne sommes pas des Anglais, nous sommes Canadiens.*' *Des braves garçons.* They came often and sat at my table and I gave them coffee."

The man shows a post card of himself and the two boys.

"My wife was *bien élevée.* It is hard for the boys to have lost such a mother," he sighs. "*Mais les enfants, et Alsace Lorraine c'est ça qui nous console.* If the English had not come we would have been eaten by the *boches.*"

He is proud of the English fuses he is using as matches, and shows us how they work, and explains in detail his possessions.

"This furniture the *boches* repaired for their own use. They came here in September, 1914. You can have no idea what this farm was like before their visit. My boys will live to see the fields fertile as they used to be."

We are loath to leave this home and unwilling

to feel that our visit here is but a passing moment to be forgotten.

"Will you give us your name?" we ask the ploughman. He writes in a fine clear handwriting, "Paul Déquent à Haucourt, par Arras, Pas de Calais."

"In the motor we have a little Christmas *goûtér*," we say to the old lady. "Perhaps your son will come back with us to get it for you."

"And if he does not, I will take the walk myself. *Voilà! le petit chien*, he has gotten up to follow you. He must have understood the word *goûtér*, and even the lazy kitten moves."

We leave her standing in the doorway. With an irresistible impulse, in saying good-bye, we kiss her French fashion on both cheeks.

"*Merci bien, Mesdames, pour votre bonne visite et merci aussi aux autres Américains qui sont venus nous aider.*"

After a few moments the man stops, "Why, we have forgotten the gun, the purpose of your visit."

As we return through the ploughed fields we think only of this little peasant woman.

"*La vieille mère*, does she keep well?" we ask.

"*C'est à dire.* She is over 70. One day she is all right and the next she is feeble."

The horses have not moved. Possibly they

think that they are still posing for a photograph. More likely, however, they are tired and grateful to chance visitors who have given them respite from work. In passing glimpses, we have seen some of the assets of the Arras-Cambrai road, the workman of the destroyed factory, the brave women with their "Rue de la Victoire," the ploughman with his *vieille mère*. In his words, "People will be coming back before next summer." Instead of straggling workmen on the horizon, the fields, ploughed and planted, will be restored to normal conditions. The wheels of industry will be turning again. The Arras-Cambrai road will be reclaimed because *on aime son pays*.

CHAPTER XIX

CAMBRAI

CAMBRAI had a particularly tragic war history. When it had to be shelled by the British in order to dislodge the enemy, the civilians were forced to flee into "occupied Belgium."

On our visit to Cambrai directly after the Armistice we had found the courtyard of the *Mairie* crowded. Groups of people were standing before posters giving the information that flour rations must again be cut down—and that there was no relief in sight. Mothers after reading the announcement glanced anxiously towards their children—but we heard no complaints. Many children were suffering from rickets and their bodies were of the same size from shoulder to ankle. Only a few had shoes and their feet were bleeding from chilblains. Their skins were in a hideous condition from diseases caused by wearing the same underlinen for months and most of them had but one thin outer garment.

We had found the *maire* in conference with a group of officials. Without adjectives, and in a monotone, they gave us a picture of the exodus of the people while shells were falling.

"There were but nine people here when the British troops entered," the *maire* had said, "but as soon as the retreat of the enemy was known the population came streaming back and nothing could stop them. It made a difficult situation as the enemy had taken off everything in the way of live-stock and food stuffs—the houses were destroyed and all our transportation facilities had been wrecked."

As we come into the town through the suburbs we are thinking of the scene in the *Mairie* a year ago. The locks and bridges of the canal are now either in order or under construction. But one fears that the question of transportation is still a problem since even on the main square there has been less done in the way of clearing away the débris than in other towns of the importance of Cambrai.

There is a certain pathos in the numerous signs sticking out from piles of bricks and rubbish on the sites of former shops, giving their present locations. We stop to read some of them: "*Pâtisserie provisoirement rue Cambrai*" and "*Bonneterie provisoire-*

ment 9 rue Douai" and we wonder how long they will have to remain in their temporary quarters.

We pass a house, intact, which has white lace curtains in the windows. Not to be outdone, the house next door, bombed almost to pieces, has on its one remaining window imitation lace curtains in white paint.

We visit a number of our families. The more one sees of Cambrai, the more evidence one finds of past suffering. In the streets but little building material is lying about and there are only a few repaired houses.

We go to the office of the "Région Libérée." A pale, tired-eyed official receives us.

"Here in Cambrai," he says, "*La vie commence un peu, mais doucement*, but after all, there is no need for discouragement. The work of reclaiming land has gone on rapidly everywhere."

"How many refugees have already returned to the devastated departments?" is our first question.

"Of the 2,000,000 driven out by the fighting, 1,300,000 have returned to their home regions."

"Will you tell us what is the connection of your bureau with the Industrial Bureau?" asks Priscilla.

"The 'Région Libérée,'" he replies, "is responsible for restoring community life in the devas-

Children Helping their Lame Soldier-Father to Reclaim the Farm

"Maison Roulante." Many of these are Seen on the Roads of the North

tated area and the 'Reconstitution Industrielle' attends to everything affecting factories."

"Please give us some idea of the agricultural situation," we say.

"Before the war, France was a land of intensive agriculture and with almost one-half of the total area of the country under cultivation, was practically self-sustaining. The devastated area was most productive and large crops of wheat, sugar-beet and flax came from this district. Our farmers were more affected by the war than any other one class. 250,000 of them belonged in the war zone. The strength of the French nation has been in the number of its land owners. Of the 12,000,000 householders 9,000,000 lived in their own homes and most of the estates were small.

"When mobilization took the farmers, old men, women and children carried on their work. Not only in the back area but in the war zone, often under bombardment, they learned how to use agricultural machinery and acquired a knowledge of the science of farming. Since the Armistice they have continued working. There are now more than 300 coöperative agricultural societies in the liberated area. This has helped our progress.

"The Government had advanced to the farmers up to October, 1919, 550,000,000 francs for the

purchase of agricultural machinery, implements, animals, fertilizers and seed. 2500 shelters have been built for farm stock."

"Are there any invaded townships where the inhabitants have not returned? " we ask.

"Only 50 out of 4000 have not resumed municipal administration up to date. We have put up a vast number of temporary dwellings and over a thousand buildings for use as *Mairie* and schools.

"As a ministry this is what we have accomplished since the Armistice. The rubbish has been removed, all usable material salvaged, the bridges and main roads have been rebuilt and railroad and canal transportation resumed. Food distribution is adequate and medical and nursing service has been reëstablished. Wherever you go you see new buildings and factories in operation. We have opened many training schools for workmen in specialized trades. More than 6000 square miles of land was made useless during military operations. By October, 1919, 65 per cent was again under cultivation. Veritable forests of barbed wire had to be removed and the work was performed under constant danger from unexploded shells. It is cheering to sum up what we have already accomplished in moments when we are discouraged by the amount of work that remains to be done."

As we take our leave he says: "Stop at one of the farms along the road and get the farmer to tell you his story."

After lunch we go to the *Mairie*. The general appearance of people coming out and going into the different bureaus and the snatches of conversation that we overhear, show that business routine is being resumed.

We ask the little old *gendarme* of the *Mairie*, whom we remember from our last visit, if we can see the *maire*, but on being told that he is not expected until 2.30 say we cannot wait.

"But you were here after the Armistice, Mesdames—were you not? You should wait for *Monsieur le Maire. C'est un brave homme lui*. To leave Cambrai without seeing him would be a pity."

We tell him what a distance we must go before dark and at our request he directs us to the Industrial Bureau, recently moved from the Chamber of Commerce.

Monsieur Emmonet, director of the sector, receives us, and seems glad to give us information.

"Of our pre-war population of 30,000," he says, "we have 22,000 back and many of them are workmen. The *boches* forced some of the civilians to destroy their own factories. Many others factories

were deliberately gutted. The machines taken off from this vicinity are being returned but a great many need repairing, and we lack tools.

"However, more than 40 per cent of our factories are again in operation. But they are mostly the small ones and none of them are running full time.

"Our sugar industry was highly developed. Of the 206 sugar factories in France, 140 were in the devastated area and 90 per cent of these were destroyed. One of the sugar factories in this region, the most modern of its kind, was dismantled and its machinery installed in a German factory. The largest sugar factory in the world was on the Valenciennes road."

"Has that been rebuilt?" we ask.

"No," he replies, "there is a shortage of beet root and those factories which have been reëstablished cannot run full time. The peasants hesitate to raise beet crops as they see but few factories under construction. On the other hand, the manufacturers not finding the fields in shape for beet crops are slow in rebuilding.

"The Government is working out a plan for the manufacturer to raise his own crops. This should remedy the deadlock. But we have some sugar factories in operation—also some chocolate and

chicory factories. I wish you would visit a few of them and tell your American friends that we are doing something."

Soon after the Armistice, when we had been in Valenciennes, we stayed in a British casualty clearing station. The sanitation of this hospital had been destroyed by the retreating enemy and the region flooded. The huge electric plant, the steel works, the gas, shoe and stone-work factories were all completely ruined.

As a contrast to this wholesale industrial wreck in many quarters of the town there were brilliant displays of brass and copper pots hanging in doorways. When we had asked why they had been placed there the answer was:

"The people wish to show off what they succeeded in hiding from the enemy."

We stop in Valenciennes en route for Sedan to ask about the industrial progress. We can hardly believe the figures given us. By this November, 1919, 60 per cent of the destroyed factories are running and employing 20 per cent of the personnel of 1914.

Just outside of Mézières we are attracted by a well-kept farm, and, remembering the advice of the Région Libérée official,—stop to call on the farmer. He seems anxious to tell us in detail some of his problems.

"There is a great dearth of incubators, and it is difficult to get chickens, rabbits, ducks and turkeys in sufficient quantities. Some of the well-to-do people buy livestock and give it to farmers who have initiative, hoping in this way to increase the stock and reproduce good breeds, then by redistribution help other farmers get on their feet. They try to make the farmers coöperate in the disposal of their product as well as in the purchase of their stock."

We ask him where he got his animals and farm implements and he replies:

"With money advanced by the 'Région Libérée.' Before the war I had a threshing machine which was operated by horses; it cost me 1200 francs; it was lost during the fighting and to replace it now would cost 4500 francs. Instead of using the money advanced to get a new threshing machine, I bought a haying machine and a combined reaper and binder. It is not possible for the Government to furnish each one of us with the equivalent of the machines we had before the war, but we all get something. It is unfortunate that my crop of oats was bad this year, due to the poor condition of the soil. We are going to have difficulty in getting seed oats and seed wheat. Before the war one paid 25 francs for 100 kilos. Now it would be difficult to get 100 kilos for 100 francs.

"Another problem we have to face is the price of labor. Also, although you use the workmen only in the summer, you have to pay for their keep during the winter as well, and the money needed for replacement of equipment is often used up in this way. But I get on fairly well. I have five cows which bring me in an average of 20 francs a day, and that is enough to keep the family going.

"Perhaps you would be interested in comparative prices paid for things in 1914 and now. In 1914 a cow cost 500 francs and now costs 2500 francs; sheep were 40 francs, now 200; pigs per kilo on the hoof one franc, now 8 francs; hens that were 3 francs, are now 20 and rabbits that were 3 francs now cost 12 francs."

"Have the farming implements gone up in price in the same proportion?" we ask.

"Judge for yourselves," he answers. "In 1914 one paid 150 francs for a plough that now costs 500 francs. A cart was 500 francs and is now 1500; a sowing machine was 300 francs, now 2400. A mowing machine was 400 francs and now costs 1000 francs; a reaping machine 850 francs, now 3500; a threshing machine that cost 1200 francs now costs 4500 francs. Do you wonder that the Government is not able to furnish us all we need?"

CHAPTER XX

MANUFACTURING TEXTILE MACHINERY

It is late when we reach Sedan and Monsieur Monnet is not in his factory. We find him in a small restaurant. As there is no hotel in the town we plan to go on to Charleville that night, but he insists that we stay in Sedan and be entertained by one of his friends. He takes us to a large house on the Square and presents us to our hostess, Madame Hailleux. We are somewhat embarrassed in arriving at the home of an entire stranger with our mass of luggage, but the warm welcome of our hostess puts us at our ease. We pass a delightfully intimate evening with the members of her family. The clock on the mantel ticks away as unconcernedly as if it had always remained in place instead of having been in a niche in back of the wardrobe during the entire war. Madame Hailleux says:

"My great-grandmother hid that clock in 1815; my grandmother hid it in 1870 and you see, histo-

ry repeats itself—it has been hidden again since 1914."

Her daughter and granddaughter are knitting. The latter is charmingly pretty in a rose-colored sweater, her chestnut hair in braids coiled low on her neck. She is learning typewriting that she may act as her father's secretary.

Madame Hailleux brings out the family album and we are particularly interested in the photograph of her distinguished looking great-grandmother, wearing a pendant of pearls. When we comment on its beauty, she says:

"The Germans took it, but they left the imitation replica."

Our hostess tells us that as she was head of the local Red Cross she had insisted on remaining in Sedan. Her daughter and granddaughter had escaped before the enemy arrived.

"I was treated better than most of the inhabitants," she says. "Of course, my mattresses and bedding were all taken, my pet desk was opened and letters and papers stolen, and my daughter's and son-in-law's correspondence during their engagement and early married life was found strewn about the public park. My daughter-in-law was less fortunate than I. Her house was stripped bare of its contents. I had various officers quartered in

my house, the Commander among them. He behaved rather well, possibly because he had an American wife who was with him, and through his influence I got my mattresses back. I am the only woman in the town who did have a mattress during the occupation."

When we speak of her courage in remaining in Sedan she says:

"It was not courage, but duty that kept me here—and I was never lonely. There was always so much work to be done. We are all grateful for American assistance during the war, especially for the work of the Commission.

"I am rather proud of the record of our French Committees after the Armistice. We had quite a refugee problem in the Ardennes. Of the 180,000 refugees, 150,000 have come back. We had a population of 325,000 before the war. Of course, there is no department that has had the sad record of the Somme where almost its entire population of 280,000 was twice driven out. But they, too, have been returning in large numbers.

"Throughout the devastated area district nursing was organized to care for epidemics and accidents, mostly burns resulting from explosions. The personnel was almost entirely volunteer. Many of the girls now driving trucks, have driven am-

bulances during the war. After the Armistice they distributed supplies going about over bad roads, and exposed to the cold and storm. Nothing daunts these girls, and they do their work in a quiet, efficient way."

Referring to the loss in man power she says:

"Never again can my generation or my daughter's generation be gay. There are too many vacant places in our homes and those of our friends. The men my granddaughter and her friends might have married were killed. Many of the girls are learning some serious occupation and work will help them to forget these hard times."

Our party breaks up rather late, Madame Hailleux escorting us to our bedroom. Passing through the dining-room which seems especially cheerless, unheated and lighted by a single shadeless bulb hanging over the table, she remarks:

"I had such a beautiful chandelier with many lights, but the enemy said one light was enough for me and took the chandelier away."

We go to sleep with the noise of the tumbling waters of the Meuse in our ears and the warmth of the hospitable welcome of this friendly family in our hearts.

Early the next morning Monsieur Monnet calls to take us to his factory. On our way we ask

what had been the main industry of Sedan before the war.

"Sedan was a large textile center," he replies. "Twice the Germans have tried to make the wool-combing industry here extinct, in 1870 and again in this war— but it will become a stronger industry now, even as it did then.

"The commune of Sedan, like all the other occupied districts, was pillaged and more than 200 textile factories were destroyed and all the rolling mills dynamited. Our commune is a big one with a pre-war population of almost 40,000. Many of the men were employed in the textile factories.

"I am not of Sedan but have come here because I am convinced that this is a strategic point to compete with Germany in the manufacture of textile machinery."

"But we always thought Sedan was a spinning and weaving center—and you're talking about machinery," says Priscilla.

"Quite true," he replies, "but French spinners must be supplied with new machinery promptly, or this important industry will be lost for France. Formerly, France did not produce her own textile machinery, but bought it from England, Germany and other countries.

Factory of "Société Gnomes et Rhone" which through the War Turned out Thousands of Airplane Motors. Now Making Automatic Looms

Framework of Charleville Factory Set up in Germany

"I tried to enlist in the Aviation Service but my application was refused and I was commissioned instead, because of my knowledge of machinery, to produce machines for making ammunition, special types of long range guns, and later, motors for airplanes.

"We had to produce so many different kinds of war machinery and get it out so rapidly that to facilitate the work we opened drafting rooms in Lyons, Paris and also in Geneva where we made use of French engineers interned in Switzerland.

"In these drafting rooms while working on the immediate war needs we looked ahead to peace-time industry and our engineers drafted plans for making textile machines.

"After the Armistice the 'Société Gnomes et Rhone' which had been one of the most important airplane motor factories immediately turned to the production of machines for spinning combed wool and within a short time was filling orders for 20 million francs.

"The factory I am going to take you through, 'Ateliers de Sedan,' is equipped with American machines which were brought from a factory in Lyons. Within a year we expect to be turning out 100 looms a week, and of a type that formerly were manufactured only in Germany. After we have

supplied our own needs we will be in a position to manufacture for export.

"We shall be equipped to compete with Germany in the manufacture of looms and machines for spinning combed wool and flax—even at the low price at which the Germans are selling them. They destroyed, at present valuation, 600 million francs' worth of these machines.

"Let me show you through the buildings."

As we go through the yards on our way to the shops he points to a long line of army trucks and says:

"They once carried German war material. I bought them from a salvage station."

Entering the first shop, Monsieur Monnet remarks:

"This was formerly a felt factory and the Germans wrecked the machines and the buildings. I took over the *dommage de guerre* from the owner."

In a restored shop workmen are removing huge masses of waste iron to make room for the American machinery from Lyons.

The next shop that we enter is in process of construction.

"This was started only two weeks ago and it is half-finished," he says. "Twenty-five automatic cranes are to be installed here."

We go out, back of the factory towards the canal and slushing through the mud come to a huge tractor in a field.

"What use can you make of a tractor in your factory?" asks Priscilla.

"It's the 500 H.P. engine that we want. I expect to install it in a boat to be used on the canal to transport my machinery. We are using the canals of the north more and more."

He points out a new bridge across the canal under construction and remarks: "The old one was dynamited by the Germans in their retreat."

"What use are you going to make of this field?" we ask.

He replies laughingly, "Despite the depth of the mud—within six months there will be a factory here in operation."

Monsieur Monnet takes us in our motor to Charleville. Passing through Mézières, we cross the temporary bridge which replaces the one dynamited by the enemy the day before the Armistice. The foundry which he owned here had also been dynamited by the Germans the same day. Pointing to the ruins he says:

"The steel framework of the foundry was taken to Germany by the enemy. After the Armistice I found it at the Krupp Steel Works, where it had

been used during the war to manufacture parts for railroad construction. When I told the manager that forty workmen were awaiting my order to start breaking up the glass and moving the framework back to France a violent protest was made.

"'We need the factory,' said the Germans. 'It is not fair to take it away.'

"Pointing out to them that this was exactly what they had done to my property, I compromised by an agreement that they make for me a new framework to replace the one stolen and that it should be half again as large as the old one to reimburse me for my loss. According to contract the new factory is to be delivered by February, 1920, and I have just received word it is about ready for shipment.

"I tried to buy the equipment for this foundry in America—but at the present rate of exchange would have had to pay six times as much as the German price. The French Government authorizes manufacturers to take francs into Germany for the purchase of necessary machinery and I went to Durlach and bought various machines. These were delivered within six weeks.

"I should have preferred American machinery but could not afford it. I am a great believer in

Metal Factory in Charleville Destroyed at the Time of the Armistice and now in Operation

Restored Forge in the Ardennes

a partnership between America and France industrially.

"I don't want you to get an impression of the whole industrial situation in the Ardennes Sector from the textile industry. There were other important industries, for instance, the tool and metal industries, and in Sedan alone, 4000 metallurgical workers were employed. We have done rather well on the whole with 47 per cent of our destroyed factories now in operation.

"It is encouraging to note the interest of the textile workmen who constantly inquire when the factories will be running. However, time is a very important element. The former workers of Sedan and other textile centers cannot wait indefinitely for employment and unless the factories are promptly rebuilt, they will drift away to other communities and other work. With these textile workers of the north lies the revival of the textile industry.

"Important as the big factories were we must not overlook the fact that 80 per cent of the factories in France were small ones. In them was her industrial strength as agriculturally her strength was in the number of small land-owners. These small factories must be provided with equipment and working capital in order to begin immediate production.

"Every franc must be invested in production. That is the only solution of the grave industrial situation that France and the world is facing" are the parting words of Monsieur Monnet.

We leave the north for Paris with the conviction that through the work of this practical idealist and other men of his dynamic force, the future of French industries is assured.

AFTERWORD

A VISITOR to France is impressed with the variety and breadth of ideas found within her boundaries. A nation that has produced Pasteur, Rodin, Debussy, Victor Hugo and Jaurès has a wide swing of the pendulum.

Not any one class, but the whole of France fought with the motto "*Il faut en finir.*" The Marne began a battle lasting four years which demonstrated the moral strength of the French nation, as well as the genius of its military command. The spirit of France was expressed by the *poilus* advancing with *le rire Français*, by the wounded in the hospitals with the *ça va* no matter how great their suffering; and by the "army in the rear"—the sisters, wives and mothers of the men who were fighting.

The women were called upon by the State to fill positions in the railroads, factories and civil offices left vacant by mobilization. Their organization for relief was so efficient that one was unaware of the mechanism by which it operated. The work-

ers were self-effacing. One seldom heard the names of individuals or committees but saw everywhere the results of their work. Besides nursing the sick and wounded they distributed supplies close to the line of fire and cared for refugees and *rapatriés*.

This same *esprit Gaulois* made the civilians struggle back to the one bit of land each felt responsible for reclaiming. Had they failed the invaded departments would have remained a barren waste. Each reclaimed ruin is a tribute to the inhabitants who won in the fight against hunger, cold and crushing misfortunes. Despite hardships of every kind the number of returning inhabitants steadily increased, month by month; and the look of peace in their faces expressed that nothing else mattered now that men no longer were laying down their lives—and that France was saved.

After the Armistice committees helped the people of the devastated area find the means of earning a livelihood; and the motto was: "Don't give them pity; give them work."

Now that emergency needs have passed, women are organizing to deal with three of the great problems France is facing: restoring community life; fighting tuberculosis; and working for child welfare.

The French physicians and scientists are cooperating with the American Commission for the

Prevention of Tuberculosis in a comprehensive educational campaign, and many French women are devoting their lives to this service.

The present generation of children in Europe has fallen far below par physically. The International Red Cross has outlined a program to remedy this situation and to raise the general health standard. In France the wider scope for nurses' work has been recognized and this will result in more training schools.

With her war losses and her birth rate still lower than her death rate France under able leadership is availing herself of every scientific contribution to insure the future of her race. The Child Welfare Center in Lille is but one of many welfare centers.

In proportion to population France had more men mobilized than any of the other Allies, and this from the beginning up to the very end of the war; and she had the greatest loss in man power. In the United States 1 of every 2000 inhabitants was killed; in Italy 1 of every 79; in England 1 of every 66; and in France 1 of every 28.

France must face an enormous expenditure, the largest items being interest on the national debt, restoration of the devastated area, and pensions to disabled soldiers and the families of those killed.

In speaking of the exchange situation Millerand said:

"If France were asked to meet her foreign obligations at the present rate of exchange it would mean that she would have to pay more than twice as much as she borrowed. France is not asking for cancellation of her debts, but she is asking for time to recover her strength, exhausted by four years of struggle."

The problems of production and distribution are not only national but international, and it is to the interest of the Allies that France should be industrially strong. It is necessary that England, France and America should be closely associated in industry, working as partners in order to prevent Germany from dominating commercially.

The transfer from military service to industrial activities was made promptly and efficiently by the Government; and the fact that seventy per cent of the destroyed factories have been reëstablished, and that such progress has been made in the production of machinery, shows that the whole of France is working together.

The people are willing to continue living in temporary quarters in order that in the distribution of supplies for rebuilding precedence be

given to the factories, realizing that their own future prosperity is assured in this way.

An influential factor in the industrial future of France lies in the development of her water power possibilities and in the resources of Alsace-Lorraine. But the immediate needs of France are for more labor saving machinery and building material for the devastated area.

The destruction has been so tremendous that even with the newly acquired pit-coal, iron ore, potash and other assets of Alsace-Lorraine, France must get from outside sources a great quantity of wood, cement, brick, glass, iron, lime and steel. She also needs raw material for her industries, especially leather, cotton, wool and various chemicals. All raw and manufactured material can now be admitted from foreign countries without restriction.

Transition periods always are marked by discontent and unrest. Revolutions are caused by political and economic conditions, but can be avoided by wisdom in the governing classes. France was the first nation to spread the ideas of liberty and equality. The Republic has maintained its foundation of brotherhood, and a revolution is therefore impossible.

France realizes fully the task that confronts her,

different but just as pressing and essential as the tasks of the war. The framework of her civilization is being rebuilt, order restored, ruins reclaimed, budgets regulated, and agricultural and industrial possibilities developed. She is prepared to face a heavy direct tax. The accomplishments already to her credit since the Armistice prove her business ability. In many respects she has become a new country. Pioneer life on the frontier with all its hardships is being faced with the grim determination and staying quality of the civilians which was so largely responsible for the military victory.

The French people by their thrift, industry and good sense have passed through periods during the war more difficult than the present one. The qualities that made France a strong nation have been intensified by suffering. The only desire of the people is to work until France is prosperous again. Her 1,400,000 dead have not for one moment been forgotten, but the memory of their sacrifice has spurred her on to action. "*Debout pour les vivants et pour la France immortelle!*"

There is no question but that compensation should be made by Germany for all damage done to the civilian population of the Allies and to their property. At her door lies the death of 9,000,000

A Solitary French Grave

An American Cemetery

men and the disablement of 30,000,000 more. No indemnity could pay the French civilians for what they have suffered through the death or incapacity of soldiers upon whom they were dependent for support, and material reparation in proportion to the amount of wanton destruction is impossible.

It is not a question of how much Germany should pay, but how much she can be made to pay without economic disaster. Industrial prosperity in Germany is a necessity in order that she may be in a position to meet her obligations. To insure the economic stability not only of Germany but of the world a definite sum should be fixed upon for the indemnity, but this sum must be the maximum that Germany can pay.

Aiming at France in the peace as she did in the war Germany through her propaganda is appealing to speculators to back her as a better economic risk than France.

The Germans will show no more conscience in carrying out the terms of the peace treaty than they did in their conduct of the war unless the Allies stand as one in compelling her to act with justice.

England and America must guarantee the security of France against again becoming the battle

ground of Europe or Germany in defeat will have succeeded in dealing more lasting blows to France than by her victory of 1870.

Helping to win an honored and lasting peace is a living memorial that America can offer to her men who died in France, and unless she stands with the Allies, by whose side she fought, America breaks faith not with England or with France, but with her fifty thousand dead.

APPENDIX

APPENDIX

TABLE 1

Comparative Number of Destroyed Factories again in Operation, November, 1919, and March, 1920

	Per cent. Nov. 1919	*Per cent. Mar. 1920*	*Factories in operation March, 1920*
Departments:			
Nord	60.9	72.5	1345
Pas de Calais	56.1	63.04	87
Somme	51.	62.9	114
Oise	77.5	78.3	65
Aisne	48.2	64.1	161
Marne	55.7	61.1	44
Ardennes	47.6	68.04	260
Meuse	45.4	58.8	30
Meurthe and Moselle	65.3	75.4	114
Vosges	67.	67.5	27
Principal Centers:			
Lille	71.2	81.2	874
Avesnes	50.	59.2	157
Valenciennes	59.7	71.4	153
Douai	45.8	57.1	56
Cambrai	40.9	53.6	81
Hazebrouck	36.8	48.	24
Total	57.9	70.1	2247

TABLE 2

COMPARISON OF INDUSTRIES IN OPERATION NOVEMBER, 1919–MARCH, 1920

Industry	*Per cent. November 1919*	*Per cent. March 1920*
Mining	46.6	66.6
Stone work	78.5	87.1
Chemical	53.1	72.8
India rubber, paper, carton	45.8	58.3
Textile	51.8	64.
Hide and leather	66.6	81.1
Lumber	63.6	77.7
Metallurgy	44.4	58.
Metal work	60.5	76.9

TABLE 3

PERSONNEL EMPLOYED NOVEMBER, 1919, AND MARCH, 1920, COMPARED WITH 1914, ACCORDING TO DEPARTMENTS

	Per cent. November 1919	*Per cent. March 1920*
Departments:		
Nord	26.3	39.9
Pas de Calais	4.	8.9
Somme	29.6	37.2
Aisne	15.8	18.9
Marne	27.1	28.3
Ardennes	18.8	30.3
Meuse	12.	19.8
Meurthe and Moselle	25.5	34.3
Vosges	47.	48.8
Principal Centers:		
Lille	34.7	51.1
Avesnes	19.5	29.1
Valenciennes	19.	29.3
Douai	7.8	15.5
Cambrai	10.7	17.6
Hazebrouck	16.4	32.3
Total	23.1	33.4